

Foreword to the Second and Third Editions

The continued demand for this book which necessitated the publication of a second and third edition is a clear indication of its practical usefulness. In numerous letters readers have expressed their gratitude both to the author and the publisher for the great advantages they have obtained from it. Many have even journeyed to visit the author to assure him personally of their recovery and new-found joy in life. Many spiritual directors, too, have expressed their pleasure over the useful services rendered by the book. The object we had in mind when publishing it has obviously been achieved. God grant, then, that this new edition may go on doing good wherever the book goes!

Fr. Joseph Massmann
December 1941

Introduction

This book does not pretend to be a scientific work. Its intention is to stimulate self-knowledge and to help those sufferers who are at war with themselves to find the way to self-control. It is with this practical purpose that the book, like the original isolated essays, repeats again and again certain leading ideas which are intended to become the property of the reader.

In spite of the best intentions it is possible that some nervous people will find in this book the opposite of what is intended. The book is unsuitable for such people., for from books of this kind they only discover that they have more maladies than they at first thought.

The word “nervous” is not used here as synonymous with “ill” or abnormal. It is used to cover very broadly any undue excitability of the feelings. To the proper assessment of temperaments belongs the observation of both over- and under- excitable natures. In the life of the soul it is impossible to draw an exact dividing line between healthy and sick, between what conforms more or less to the rule and what contradicts it. The reader who does not simply skim through the essays, but reads and studies them thoughtfully with the object of observing his own and others’ spiritual life, will discover that nervous temperaments, even if real nervous disorders are not present, are much more general than one might think.

The Author

PART ONE

The Study of Temperament

“The truth will set you free”

John 8:32

I

The Use and Advantages of the Study of Temperament

One meets people who become nervously disturbed as soon as they hear temperaments mentioned. They are usually oversensitive minds that unconsciously become perturbed when their pet peculiarities are attacked. Others gladly listen to and carry on amiable conversation on the subject of temperament, but they anxiously avoid any serious examination of it, by remarking that it is impossible to ascertain anything definite in the “happy hunting ground” of speculations, and that what knowledge there is, is of little consequence in practical life. Is not this merely an innate fear of self-knowledge, self-control and self-denial – qualities hard to come by, but sorely needed? The man who will not allow his illusions of an imagined superiority to be disturbed has no desire to get to know his temperament and is indeed incapable of doing so. The difficult study of temperament takes for granted an earnest longing after self-perfection. The man who is not striving to become a better man resists the truth and keeps out of its way.

For those who are striving after inward perfection – even for those who merely want to make a success of life – it is useful, indeed necessary, to examine these questions. Many people who mean well, but who do not know themselves, commit excesses, by giving way to their temperament, which costs them their situations or completely shatter their happiness. They would be able to do great things if they clearly realized the violence of their feelings and learned to avoid extravagance. The awful power of the emotions resembles the fire of which the poet says:

*When checked by man and in his sight,
Beneficent is fire's might;
But frightful is this vital force
When, unrestrained, it takes its course
And forward leaps upon its way,
As Nature's daughter, free and gay.*

Deep and passionate temperaments which either are not trained or are left to themselves rage like torrents and leave in their path a sort of devastation. The very best talents are useless without self-knowledge. Men of genius who have failed lie scattered everywhere upon the path of life. People remark upon the sad waster of good talents. Passionate temperaments are usually associated with good talents, with the powers, gifts and character which are needed in life. The cultivation of these talents, the harmonizing of them with reality and with his profession, ensures a man's future and is of greater value to him than great riches.

The word "temperament" signifies an unvarying disposition of the moods of the mind. The mind is influenced and tempered by the secret emotions. It is as a result of this disposition that men bear themselves differently in relation to their environment. Where one laughs, another may cry. One thinks, judges and acts under the influence of this emotional bias, either when gentle and scarcely perceptible humors, or when violent passions affect one's behavior. A human being almost always acts emotionally. This does not mean that the feelings really decide the issue in business transactions or that the heart rules all our actions. The intellect remains the supreme judge, and the will the King, in the realm of the spiritual powers. The intellect should control the feelings and the will dominate passion and mood. But in their activity both are dependent upon their servants and slaves, the emotions. Thought and volition are inclined in the direction in which the heart tugs. Intellect and will limp as a rule behind, especially when some folly has already been committed. Very few people, alas, learn to subject their emotions to the intellect and the will, because they can neither refuse them their consent nor, by other and opposite ideas, awaken new emotions and humors. The majority act instinctively and excuse themselves by saying that it is their nature. They overlook the duty they have to train themselves.

As emotional impulses are seldom controlled, they have the bad reputation of being the causes of everything that is bad. They are despised, and those excellent forces are left untrained, which, in fact, determine a man's character and give direction to his thought, judgement and behavior. The man who resists and rejects all emotions from fear of their development resembles a property owner who is unable to cultivate his estate himself and yet will employ no servants because some of them are bad. The emotions are the motive forces of the soul which influence and accompany every perception, every sentiment, all our thinking and desiring, our whole conduct. It is just as wrong to despise all emotions as to advocate their unrestrained activity.

Grace itself, the love of God, has the task of leading man, from earth to God by the awakening of strong emotions. Holy Scripture speaks everywhere of the attractive power of grace. "Those who allow themselves to be led by the spirit of God are children of God." Self-love has its seat in the emotions. The man who serves his self-love "walks according the flesh" as the Apostle says. By the inpouring of God's love, the Holy Ghost may be said to consume all self-love and create a new mind. Since the original sin was committed, instinctive life has been sick. It is, therefore, in particular need of the healing and education provided by the grace of divine love. Evil emotions should be displaced by good ones and violent ones moderated. To achieve this, self-help and the knowledge of one's own temperament are necessary. The individuality of the person in its best aspects must be preserved and fostered, while its failings must be scoured away. This constitutes genuine asceticism and true wisdom. When grace touches the soul, the infusion of love awakens the tenderest and, at the same time, the most potent elements of the mind, and engenders the most profound knowledge of oneself and others. "He led me into His wine cellar and ordered all my impulses," says the bride in the sublime Song of the love of God.

Even in our relations with our fellow men, knowledge of their temperament is of great value. If we wish to reach our goals and carry out our plans we have to make an indulgent use of others' temperamental dispositions. No one enjoys attacks upon his individuality. Provided we respect that, a man is prepared to serve us, not only in fair weather, but in foul. As soon as we recognize their temperamental dispositions, we judge others aright: we do not ascribe all their actions to bad will and we see goodness as well as failings. We remain patient and are not so easily excited. We say: "Well, that is his nature." We can smile indulgently at what would otherwise annoy us considerably. Our judgement of the efforts of others will be more just. We remain tranquil when our choleric superior speaks to us sharply in a commanding tone. After all, his is a choleric temper and he acts accordingly.

The patience of the choleric waiter is not strained when the melancholic customer is slow and taciturn, or when the customer of sanguine temperament is superficial or frivolous in his behavior. The man of melancholic disposition is appeased when he knows that his is inclined to be mistrustful, and is, therefore, himself to blame for misunderstandings. The man who knows his own temperament will think more humbly of himself, for he will see that his advantages are not so much the result of his own efforts as of his fortunate predisposition. He will discover that alongside his good qualities he has counterbalancing failings; the choleric man will not be so proud of his quick understanding, his sure judgement and his strong will, when he realises that his weaknesses lie in his lack of the best and noblest feelings, those of goodness of heart, and that his generosity is full of selfishness, his judgement full of harshness. The melancholic man will not over estimate his high ideals and his religious disposition when he knows that, in spite of his piety, he often wounds love through being scandalized and making loveless judgments, and through being too stiff in his opinions. How frequently will the educator strike his breast in remorse at the failings of his children, when he knows himself and the temperaments of others! The success of the priest in the confessional will often be greater, if he realizes how very different individual men are. The training of one's own character can only be achieved by the recognition of one's own temperament.

The proper recognition of our temperament forms the basis for a real knowledge of human beings. This work of recognition demands the observation of oneself over a period of years, and inward recollection. The sweet thought of God's unfailing presence is a necessary predisposition for this exercise. It is only in the sight of God that a man frankly admits his failings. The choleric man overlooks them, the melancholic man magnifies them. Recollection without God's presence becomes a mere self-reflection, just as an examination of conscience remains self-deception, if God is excluded.

II

The Three Types of Temperament

No two people have exactly the same temperament. One could almost say that there are as many types of temperament as there are individuals. The old philosophers accepted four basic types of mind. English philosophers speak of five, and modern science speaks of twenty or more. An exact observation of the constitution of different minds makes it possible in practice to reduce it to three basic types.

The mind can have superficial feelings which are light and do not go deep. These seem to adhere to the outward sense impressions and to be powerless to penetrate further into the soul. I call this the sanguine temperament. The feelings associated with it can be of varying degree – fiery, ardent, warm or simply, sanguine. We are in the habit of associating fire with the sanguine temperament and cold with phlegmatic temperament and we use these terms for the temperaments themselves, too. As a result of this a clarification of the several types of temperament is made difficult or even impossible.

We shall find that both the choleric and the melancholic man can be fiery, warm and cool, too, without their basic dispositions being affected. If, for example, we compare a man of choleric melancholic temperament from the Middle or Upper Rhine with a man of like temperament from the Lower Rhine, they are both very different in spite of their same basic disposition. The first is fiery and the second cool. The same types are often enough called sanguine and phlegmatic, although neither has a shallow mind, but both have deep ones.

So the usual labels in use up to now are inadequate to distinguish among the temperaments as basic dispositions of the emotions, and their countless gradations. We should have to admit as many temperaments as there are gradations in each one, if each shade or tone is to have a special label. Besides a coloration of the feelings, one observes in every temperament a totally different degree of excitability and sensitivity beginning with the hypersensitive and ending with the hyposensitive. It is wrong to take the hypersensitivity of the melancholic or the choleric, with his quick, unrestrained recklessness, for the sanguine temperament.

If a more exact determination of temperament is to be made, one has first to observe the basic disposition and then the individual variation and the excitability of his emotions. On careful examination of his basic disposition, the phlegmatic person will turn out to be shallow, cool and perhaps even hyposensitive. He will be distinguishable from the sanguine man only in coloration and in his excitability, and will thus represent no distinct temperament. I therefore regard the expression “phlegmatic,” as denoting a temperament, as unnecessary. But I include under the heading *sanguine* the shallow mind; not, however, either the coloration or the easy excitability.

If a mind is possessed of dynamic emotions which are more deeply embedded, adhering, as it were, more closely to the inward sense impressions, and which stir the soul strongly, I call that mind a *choleric* one, whether or not the emotions are ardent or cool.

But if a mind has ponderous, tranquil or rigid emotions which make their way to the inmost soul only slowly and as if weighed down, I describe that mind as a melancholic one, even if its coloration is rich.

III

Characteristics of the Three Basic Types

The three basic types of emotional instinct, those of shallow, energetic and grave minds, are clearly discernible in the various forms of outward activity. The sanguine man makes use chiefly of the outer senses, the melancholic man of the inner and the choleric man of both. The sanguine man,

therefore, makes much use of the sensual memory; the melancholic man uses his emotions more and has a memory for experiences. The choleric man works chiefly with his intellect; he has a memory for intellectual perceptions. The sanguine man stands by the external aspect of things; the choleric man presses forward quickly to grasp the essential, while the melancholic man goes even deeper and looks for the purpose of things. It is for this reason that Aristotle praises the melancholic temper as the best for a philosopher. The sanguine man is satisfied as a rule with ordinary aims, the choleric aims at ideals, and the melancholic strives towards the highest ends, towards the ideal of ideals, the highest of the high, the best of the good. The will of the sanguine man, like his feelings, can be moved, but it is unstable and weak; the choleric man has a strong, courageous will which thrives on obstacles; the melancholic man as a stubborn will which is often accompanied by willfulness and often, too, by despondency. The sanguine man soon abandons resolutions and his tasks; the choleric man pursues his ends with energy; he is the leader, the organiser. The melancholic man is a slow, conscientious, persevering and grimly persistent worker. The sanguine man is good natured and cheerful, the choleric egotistical and serious, while the melancholic man is self-willed and of a very serious appearance.

The eye is often the mirror of the temperamental disposition. The sanguine man's eye is large, open shining and active, his glance lively, merry and kind. The choleric man's eye is full of fire, brilliant, mobile; his glance is frank, penetrating and determined. The eye of the melancholic man is usually deep seated, less lively, dreamy or, where the owner is hypersensitive, piercingly fixed in a stare. They are, however, mostly of a peculiar depth. The sanguine man's walk is light and free, his limbs – head and arms in particular – restless, lively; there is volatility in his brisk movements. The walk of the choleric man is full of energy; his stride shows determination. There is something proud, imposing and masterful about his bearing which is at times somewhat affected. The walk of the melancholic man is serious, dignified, slow, measured, circumspect, almost indolent. His head is often slightly bent forward. The melancholic man is not affected; there is more dignity than pride in his bearing.

It is on certain occasions that temperaments are most certainly recognised. While listening to a sermon or lecture the sanguine man observes the superficial, the unimportant qualities, while the choleric man grasps the essential content and the melancholic man the faults. Returning from a party the sanguine man talks of the comic incidents, the choleric of any creditable or praiseworthy occurrences – often enough with a certain amount of exaggeration – while the melancholic man is critical; he has not missed anything that was disgraceful or ridiculous. When he receives a commission, the sanguine man is vainly pleased at his promotion; the choleric man feels honored at being permitted to show his talent, while the melancholic man begins to wonder anxiously whether he will carry out the task creditably or otherwise. In his demeanor, especially towards superiors, the sanguine man is free, often importunate; the choleric man is frank and formal; while the melancholic is unsure of himself, gauche or shy. The right word only occurs to him when it is too late. Faced with temptation against purity, the sanguine man plays with the emotion; the choleric man despises it as being beneath him; while the melancholic grows anxious, exaggerates the danger and makes the matter worse. When a suspicion or an unkind thought crosses the mind of a sanguine man he passes it over lightly; the fiery choleric man blurts it out, makes his opinion known to everyone; the melancholy man broods over it and soon sees everything in its blackest color. If a person has to be reprimanded or an action condemned, the sanguine man does it without hesitation in a manner peculiar to himself, often wittily, and does no great harm; the choleric man is cutting, his wit is mordant, his words scornful; the melancholic man reflects at length over the matter, works himself into a rage, blusters angrily as though it were the worst thing in the world; he invites contradiction because of his exaggeration, and so improves almost no one.

When he is praised the sanguine man is pleased and accepts every compliment as genuine; the choleric man believes the praise is fully merited, his courage grows; the secret pleasure of the melancholic man is clouded by doubt as to the genuineness of the compliment. When reprimanded and punished, the sanguine man bewails the fact that he has not acted aright; the choleric man remains cold and is defiant or contradicts; the melancholic man becomes reserved, is seriously annoyed with himself or with others who do not understand him. The sanguine man soon forgets insults or the injustices done to him. He cannot bear malice. The choleric man does not forget. Every recollection of an insult stirs him up and leads up to a passionate outburst. The melancholic man becomes only slowly aware of it, reflects upon it, and is speechless with agitation. In his imagination the injustice grows worse and worse. He feels a deep bitterness and never forgets the injustice. If he ever externalizes his feelings, the outburst is violent.

In society the sanguine man looks for fun and enjoyment. To him his fellow men are friends, and he wants to make friends. The choleric man wishes to shine, show off. If he is unable to do this, he avoids company. He needs others for his own purposes and disdainfully avoids enemies. The melancholic man longs for company, but when he has it, he feels that he is misunderstood, or feels dissatisfied. He despises the company and often takes offence. He is well disposed towards others, but he fears them, mistrusts them and seeks refuge in solitude. He is too sensitive.

The sanguine man lives in the present, enjoys the moment and gives no thought to past or future. The choleric man lives more in the future, is a great builder of castles in the air, and in his zest for action performs deeds of heroism, at least in his imagination. The melancholic man lives in three worlds, not merely in the present; he grieves over the past, worries about the future and thinks frequently of eternity. Fear and pessimism torture him frequently. The sanguine man is on the lookout for pleasure, the choleric man for action, and the melancholic man for order and integrity. He is often excessively mean, superficial.

The choleric man says: "It's pouring with rain outside," and goes out. The melancholic man says: "It's raining," and grumbles about the bad weather. The sanguine man says "It's raining. It will soon be sunny again." The choleric man breaks a leg and says: "That's a nuisance. I shall waste a lot of time." The melancholic man says: "That's bad, but I shall have time for thought." The sanguine man says: "It will soon be better again. It is not bad." If one wishes to find out what someone's temperament is, one has only to ask him what he prefers to read. The literature will fall into one of three classes: light and superficial, serious, or profound and religious. With scholarly types, one asks what subjects they prefer: Are they history and science, languages and jurisprudence, or mathematics and philosophy?

It is a good thing that temperaments are never pure but regularly occur mixed together. Otherwise it would be difficult to get on with most people. The most frequently occurring mixtures are choleric-melancholic, choleric-sanguine and sanguine-melancholic. Temperaments in which choleric, melancholic or sanguine tendencies in isolation completely dominate the personality are rare. Where the mixture is good, the better facets come into sight, and harmony is preserved. Where the mixture of feelings is bad, one or another of a person's failings will be enhanced. Choleric-melancholic temperaments, if the mixture is good and warmly colored, enable the owners to achieve great things. If the coloring is cold, they give rise to calm matter of fact people; if it is fiery and over sensitive, they result in extreme natures. Sanguine-melancholic temperaments provide the good hearted natures which can hurt no one and whose goodness is often abused. The choleric-sanguine mixture too, is very valuable for life. The easily excitable or hypersensitive minds like the choleric type with its fire, and the melancholic with its depth and its injured feelings, are liable to fly to extremes. They are neither

understood nor easily controlled. These two temperaments produce those people who imagine themselves the only intelligent ones. They are incorrigible, obstinate people, who learn nothing from their mistakes. Their easily wounded feelings are blind and bad counselors. Their lives are dominated by their irritability.

IV

The Coloration and Toning of Temperaments

The coloration of temperaments is exceedingly varied. Once one has roughly established the basic direction of one's emotional impulses a further clarification is necessary. One has to find out whether one has a warm or a cold temperament and whether one is easily excitable or over-sensitive. This question of the coloration or toning of the feelings is very important. They make an individual of the human being and so distinguish him from others of the same basic temperament. Just as there are no two people who look exactly alike, so there are no two who have exactly the same temperament, even if they have the same basic disposition. One frequently observes that two personalities clash violently and cannot get on together. They can be fundamentally of like temperament, but one is fiery while the other is cold; one has a frank, the other a taciturn character. Choleric types, one with a candid and the other with a reserved character, seldom get on well together.

One characteristic of the emotions which occurs in all temperaments of every shade of color deserves special attention. This is easy excitability. It will be treated more fully in Part Two, where I deal with nervousness. In itself this easy excitability is an advantage, a perfection. The advantage lies in the ease with which the possessor attains to a sympathetic understanding of any intellectual problem. It makes a man a genius, ennobles him, provided he learns to control himself. People of outstanding greatness in the sphere of grace – saints, and famous men and women in other spheres, such as great artists – have this gift in abundance, this ability to understand and to sympathize. It is often, primarily, one of the fruits of the working of grace in the soul. But because these tender and sensitive feelings are not mastered, a nervous sensitivity often results. Intellectual work, professional demands, and environment can increase this condition considerably.

Because emotional excitability on a large scale is bound up with a delicate nervous system, English mental specialists have spoken of a "nervous temperament." Nervousness is a disease of modern times. Modern men and woman are generally hypersensitive and their feelings are all too easily wounded. This is the spirit of the times. That one's truthfulness is doubted is another frequently occurring feeling. One flies into a temper about any trifling circumstance nowadays; one generalizes all too readily; one exaggerates, one speaks and writes in overtones. Many sensitive people defend themselves heatedly without ever being attacked. People show themselves irritable in the face of any authority; any subordination, any demand for obedience. People seek honors and success with impatience. In business, in the professions, people are stormy and forever restless. They are easily insulted and resent anything which offends their ego. This hypersensitivity will tolerate no restraint, no refusal. It is characterized by a fear of humiliation. Everything is bitterly criticized and condemned.

Such people are a torture to their neighbors. As soon as their irritability is excited they are no longer their own masters. They are cross-grained and obstinate and can tolerate no other point of view

but their won. Dependent upon their nerves, the weather, sleep or their digestion, their actions are governed by their moods and they veer about like the wind. No one dares to say anything to them because they flare up and speak cuttingly. They are said to be very nervy or ill. Their illness consists in their failure and even unwillingness to master their irritability, in their failure to seek and accept the will of God, in the failure to admit their faults and in their unwillingness to conquer themselves.

They can be helped by a toughening of the moral fiber, by love of the Cross, but they shy at this like a young horse at his own shadow. These over-irritable people cannot be told anything; they know better. The choleric ones do not allow people to finish who have anything to say to them. Melancholic ones see in every gainsayer an enemy. That which could cure them is grace, the love of God and one's neighbor, but they will not allow themselves to be helped and cured.

The grading of the feelings into ardent, warm and cold (phlegmatic) is apparent in all the temperaments. The fiery coloration makes them passionate, cold produces an even tranquility. While ardent emotions drive the choleric and the melancholic man to extremes, and hinder the quiet thought of the mind, cool emotions sober them, tranquilize their thinking and give them a sense of reality. If the ardent choleric person achieves great things, yet can be one-sided and fanatical as well, the cool choleric person is a quiet matter-of-fact individual. With his good memory, sober judgement and modest demeanor, he gives an impression of reliability and does his work thoroughly. He is the born diplomat; he is wily; he is also often cold and egotistical. With his pessimism and his slowness, the cool melancholic man is liable to get on one's nerves; he is unable to work up anyone's enthusiasm for his cause. With his jaundiced outlook he often tramples upon any good that is apparent in his surroundings. He cannot escape himself and finds it extremely difficult to alter himself. The cool calculating temperament always produces reserved, involved characters. If the superficial sanguine person is cool, he stands for that which one is wont to call pure phlegm, with its tendency towards comfort, kindness, mental indolence, lack of passion, benevolence, its absence of any particular ambition, its ability to live in peace and harmony with everyone. Let us now examine the temperaments one by one in more detail, considering how one can cultivate their good points and mitigate their failings.

V

The Sanguine Man

The good man of sanguine temperament takes a cheerful view of life. He sees the good and pleasant side of things, seeks pleasure for himself and endeavors to give pleasure to others. As he is open, communicative and talkative, he rapidly makes acquaintances, and gets on with all sorts of people because he accepts them at their face value. He can tell interesting stories, is serviceable, kindly, generous, willing to share, affectionate. He knows how to console and cheer others. He has the pleasing gift of being able to draw people's attention to their faults without offending them. When he is in humorous mood, he sometimes goes a bit too far and gives offence. Lacking the passion of the choleric man and the timidity of the melancholic, he serves God in gladness and love. His kindness, his friendly and humorous disposition, makes him the darling of society. He is popular everywhere and with everyone.

The untrained man of sanguine temperament is characterized by superficiality; he is inconstant in his efforts. He makes many starts and finishes nothing; he flutters from one task or one pleasure to another. He is a man of mood, lacking principles; he is unwilling to concentrate on serious mental work and gives the impression of being frivolous. The fiery or warm sanguine type is the sport of every impression; he enthuses easily but his enthusiasm does not last; he remains attached to superficial things, and his keenness is as durable as a fire of straw. Curiosity and talkativeness make him effusive. His vanity in regard to appearances and jealousy are frequent disturbers of his peace. He is much given to flirtation. He is usually incapable of independent or profound judgment. In general the sanguine man has a distaste for sacrifice and effort, the cool one in particular. He seeks comfort before everything, is very interested in food and drink, is not easily excited; he is without passion, but also without ambition.

In the education of a person of sanguine temperament there is a greater need of strictness than leniency. He has to consider and think, to hold his tongue and to concentrate. He has to restrain the activity of his senses. He will have to apply his mind to serious things, read serious books. He must not be allowed to become absorbed in friendships and pleasure, and he has to beware of bad company and books. Jealousy, vanity, idleness, over-intimate, all-too-trusting friendships, flirtatiousness, should all be avoided. He should not pride himself upon his amiability, his affability: they are gifts of nature, not purified and tested Christian charity, which only reaches the heart through association with God. Sound principles and obedience alone will keep this type of person on the rails. He needs the support of a good friend of a deeper temperament than his own or that of fatherly authority. The cool (phlegmatic) sanguine man has to overcome his indolence and sensuality.

VI

The Choleric Man

The good type of choleric man is very self-reliant and has a strong will. His dominant tendencies are of an intellectual kind. His intelligence is usually good, he seeks to excel and is no mediocre worker. His magnanimity is of the sort that scorns baseness and meanness and aims at nobility, greatness and heroism. His clear, sharp and penetrating mind quickly grasps essentials. When the choleric man is warmly sympathetic, he takes things up with zeal and affection. His courage and love of battle increase in the face of difficulties. His keen spirit has a strong desire and fervent affection for complete comprehension. For this reason the choleric man is the person who achieves great things in all spheres. The warmly choleric person experiences within himself that which he plans, conceives and wills and thus becomes a creator, organizer and artist. He asserts his personality. In the face of it others have to bend or break.

Once the choleric man has grasped that the way to holiness consists in life with God, he turns wholeheartedly in that direction. (Paul, Ignatius and Francis were of this type.) In his prayers the choleric man concentrates upon the presence of God, and once he has recognized his gift for prayer, makes ample use of it. Acts of penance, sufferings, are then accepted courageously. Self-sacrificing people are usually choleric. Although the choleric man reveals in all his actions his proud thoughts and his self-reliance, he can also tranquilly accept the greatest humiliations and the most shameful reprimands. He can be magnanimous towards sufferers, even if he never quite forgets his own interests.

The undisciplined choleric is an egoist. He is extremely conscious of his own great worth, which enables him to look down scornfully upon people of different temperament. To him others appear to be of lower worth, untalented, stupid; he is the exclusively good, the superior. He makes the others feel his superiority and admit it openly. Woe betide those who fail to notice him! What he lacks most, therefore, is goodness, benevolence, kindliness. It is with great difficulty that he reads other men's hearts. He feels only for himself and overlooks the goodness of others and their rights. He is feared but not loved. He has as a rule little respect for established manners and customs, for the opinions of others or even for superiors. For him justice and right, worth and esteem can only be judged from his angle. He is his own lawgiver. He has a small opinion of conscience and scruple. He feels that he has grown out of that childishness, and bears subordination with difficulty. He would rather die than humble himself, than subordinate himself to others or acquiesce in their views. He finds obedience difficult. It is his love for power and honors which drives him on. He does not easily allow another to rise to his level. If he receives a setback in his ambition, he pursues his opponent through thick and thin like a tiger his booty. In his judgment of others he can be mean and petty. He is often blind to the rights and needs of others; that is his star of destiny hovering over his head.

While the ardent choleric man speaks his opinion openly of everyone, and, in the violence of his feeling, often acts without consideration and gives offence, the cool choleric man is more cautious and cunning. The ardent man's openness may prove his salvation, but the cool one is flattering to superiors; so long as he cannot be the master, he is submissive, tractable, and seeks to make himself liked by his polite behavior, or indispensable by his usefulness and knowledge. His friendliness and civility always have a certain subjective insensitivity about them. His outward smoothness often hides an inward ruthlessness and lack of feeling. He flatters those above him and tramples on those below. For opponents this choleric man has scorn and derision. He regards lenience towards subordinates as weakness. Other people's views are only of value when they serve his. He gets the idea that everyone is with him on that point. It is just these self-conscious cool, calculating and snaky choleric types, who dissimulate to reach their egotistical ends that find most difficult the inward loving communion with God.

If the choleric person is over sensitive, he runs a great danger of losing his conscience as soon as he is kept down or has to suffer some wrong. Then in his agitation, he breaks through the bounds of propriety, through the wise conventions which keep men in check. The last stirring of his conscience is overwhelmed by the fury stirred up by injured pride. He is like a tiger or a vulture. In the darkness he abandons all his plans. Inaccessible to reason, he destroys the last letter-patent of his human nature. He no longer has any respect for his profession, his honor, respectability, the conventions or the commandments of God. Coarseness, hatred and vice pursue their remorseless way unfettered over human happiness and even personal comfort. This temperament has created the worst types of pseudo apostle.

The choleric woman is more talkative than the man but, in spite of this, it is more difficult to get to know her character and temperament. She is very affected and knows how to conceal her peculiarities, her shortcomings and her faults. One must observe her in the narrow family circle. The chief effect of her temperament is to interfere with her motherly character, robbing her of maternal tenderness, gentleness, inoffensiveness and thoughtfulness. A woman of choleric temperament is possessed of passions even more ardent and spiteful than those of her male counterpart. She is very obstinate in her adhesion to her private fancies, her judgment and her views. She finds obedience hard. Owing to her stiff necked, contrary and exaggerated judgments and dealings, which are unreasonable,

she often gives offence. Her willfulness is childish. She is very fond of living in grand style, poses as learned, is sharp in her judgment and more one sided than a man. She works more with the feelings than he. The choleric woman will decidedly recite an emotional poem the best. In pain she is a heroine, in hate a fury, in rage a hyena. The love of two choleric persons is ardent during the honeymoon. Later on the quarrelling and strife is equally heated. The love that begins in roses ends in thorns.

An odd mixture of self-confidence, discouragement and self-righteousness is frequently to be met with in a choleric-melancholic temperament. If such a temperament is cool it attains with difficulty to the inner life, and creates for itself a piety which is not God-wards directed, and which is full of self-deception. It is just the cool, snakily involved, disingenuous temperament which is an almost invincible obstacle in the way of the grace and love of God, because it is so strongly set upon a piety of works and blind to grace. If the choleric-melancholic temperament is hypersensitive, it loses all restraint once the precious ego is hurt. Vulnerable feelings are part and parcel of its nature.

The education of the person of choleric temperament is difficult just because he will allow no one to impose upon him. The cool choleric person can never escape from his boxed-up ego; the ardent one is better because, owing to his hastiness, he is more offensive, and so becomes more readily conscious of his sinfulness – the necessary precondition for the operation of grace. The cool choleric person is the enemy of sentimental moods. He thinks himself a man ruled only by his reason, because his thinking is not obstructed by fervent feelings. But it is just this cold sobriety which creates an aversion for love and goodness, which he regards as sentimental.

To give the choleric person a religious upbringing, one must frequently put before him the clear object, the distinctive character of religion, which is surrender to the will of God, and kindness towards one's fellow-men; he has little feeling for either. One must cause him to seek self-knowledge in the sins against charity. He must examine himself concerning his love-less thoughts, his hard judgements and cruel words. It is in these that his chief sins lie. The choleric man thinks too much of himself and too little of his neighbors. He must be taught of God's loving commerce with men; that is his salvation. He is zealous for justice, truth, beauty; one should show him that true justice reaches its peak in compassion towards one's fellow men, and that the loveless, over hasty judgments, to which is prone, constitute the greatest injustice of all. Like God, he must be gentle and merciful with the sinner. Truth without love is hardness; the highest beauty is to be found in goodness in kindness.

The choleric man is by nature pugnacious. One should not take the axe out of his hand but show him the dry wood in his egotistical character. That is his chance to strike. Honor, fame, respect provide stimuli for great deeds. It is well for the choleric man to perform such deeds and load himself with distinctions, provided he chooses to find them in the realm of charity and not in that of selfishness. Let him keep his ambition: it must be his protector against meanness. What if he is proud and conscious of his superiority; what is a man without self-confidence?

Show the choleric man the truth. Point out to him the deep shadows of his character as well as the brighter side – show him his haughtiness, dogmatism, obstinacy, anger, unkindness, lack of feeling. Together with magnanimity, there is hard heartedness, petty fault finding in judging others; contempt, backbiting egotism, lack of sympathy, presumption, lack of respect for God, his superiors and his fellow men. The choleric man is consumed in the furnace of his ambition; give him as fuel a true picture of himself. He may then consume himself in humility and the service of others. He wishes to be the first; may he be so in accordance with Christ's words: "He who will be the first, let him become the servant, the

slave of all.” He is so ready to sacrifice others to his own interests; let him generously sacrifice himself as readily for others.

The choleric man needs clear aims and principles. The most profound humility of ministering love, respect for obedience and charity are his salvation; praise and flattery, success and recognition are disastrous to him; love of the cross is his cure. His exaggerated self-confidence must be shattered either by failures and follies, which make him offensive to himself, or by a firm authority, which impresses him forcibly. No one is more resistant to grace than the choleric man with his self-confidence, and no one is more difficult to cure of pharisaical piety than the cool, reserved choleric person, who is as smooth as a snake and who, in his own eyes, never makes a mistake.

VII

The Melancholic Man

There is also the gifted person of melancholic temperament. No one would willingly possess this temperament, because, to most, it implies only the excesses and dark sides of the disposition. In spite of this, the melancholic temperament is the most richly endowed of all. The melancholic man has a deep and rich mind. His feelings, it is true, are less readily stirred than those of other temperaments. Owing to his depth of thought they are deep, very persistent and violent. He feels what he thinks. As he feels slowly and deeply, he also thinks slowly and penetrates to the foundations of things. Thus he experiences what he thinks and is often stirred to the depths within and deeply moved. He has too many feelings and so finds decision difficult, whereas the choleric man is quick to decide. His ideals are the highest – God and the eternal, the noblest and best. But, because he is dragged down by the world and the flesh he never quite reaches his ideals, and so his soul is often inhabited by a sadness and an unsatisfied longing.

The melancholic man is profoundly thoughtful and has a religious mind, a natural disposition to piety. He likes praying and prays long, even when by so doing he neglects another duty. Contemplating the earthly, his mind rises to the eternal. A stranger and pilgrim on the earth, he longs for Heaven. He has many religious feelings. His piety is tender, emotional; without grace, it is not heroic. For the melancholic type is easily rendered despondent by crosses and suffering; he then grows bitter against God and men. He lacks trust; his disposition is, in fact, distrustful. If he is guided to inward communication with God, if he seeks to do God’s will, he experiences in his restless, agitated soul the powerful workings of God’s grace, peace in Him, and joy in His presence. In this sweet traffic with God, his tender and rich soul feels extraordinarily at peace.

The melancholic person finds joy in virtue; what he lacks is courage. He complains easily, is easily discouraged; but, once he is on the right track, he pursues his ends with tenacity. He has a strong feeling for order and justice, and a deep sense of duty, beauty, goodness and love. But his sense of sin, injustice, disorder and ugliness is just as strong. His ideals exceed the mediocre, and so his feeling that failings are injurious to his ideals is also exaggeratedly strong. This often makes him exceedingly unhappy and is often the cause of his fall. It is this temperament which furnished the profoundest thinkers, the sublimest poets, artists, inventors, legislators and, above all, religious men – the saints. The melancholic man can possess great kindness and sympathy with the sufferings of his fellow men.

Once he has discovered grace and trust in God, he makes sacrifices willingly and becomes a benefactor of mankind.

In spite of a disposition towards goodness, the untrained man of melancholic temperament is capable of very unkind acts, which he sees as such only with the greatest of difficulty. His deep feelings for the high ideals of virtue, justice and truth, of order and beauty, are easily wounded when presented with defects and sins. The most trifling disorder causes him bitterness and vexation of spirit. On this account he exaggerates faults and harbors feelings which, little by little, make him see everything in dark colors. He overlooks the good in himself and others, judges one-sidedly and unjustly. His thoughts and works lack charity.

The melancholic man who does not train himself to love remains innately prone to take offence, finding irritation in everything. The older he gets, the more petty he becomes. If he has a dash of the choleric in him, too, his proneness for vexation is only increased. If he has a little admixture of the sanguine, it is lessened, if not completely removed. He is also unable to perceive that he sees things blacker than they are, he harbors bitterness, is cross and believes he is right. The cause of his indignation and aversion is often enough real, but it is never proportionate. The ever-brooding melancholic person can exhibit the most unkind, offensive hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

This temperament is characterized by a tendency to brood. Along with a facile and great sensitivity when faced with faults and the semblance of faults, it has a tendency to mistrust. The melancholic man even distrusts those who strive continually to please him. Because he clashes with them his distrust is strengthened and since he thinks unkindly of his fellow men, they are cautious in their relations with him, and so he loses even more of his confidence in them. He is very touchy about his honor; everyone who has the appearance of attacking his ego, wishes him no good. Thus it comes about that he never preserves his complete confidence in a confessor; they at any rate do not show him that affection which he thinks he merits. No other temperament becomes possessed of so great a repugnance for others as that of the melancholic man. This aversion is so violent that he can no longer look at the person who has insulted him. Instead of speaking his mind he broods and shuts himself up in his own feelings. He is always complaining of wicked people and of injustice. This complaining type is a weakling and grows more and more unpleasant because instead of finding a way of getting on with others, he indulges in brooding.

The melancholic has a peculiar pride which is not obvious but has none the less a delicate and refined existence. He would not appear proud at any price. His pride consists in the fear of his grace. Hence his eternal unrest and fear when faced with humiliation. He is reserved because he is timid, because he is proud. He is horrified by the boastful behavior of the choleric while he is in reality even more sensitive than he, owing to his secret pride.

The timidity of the melancholic man can easily become a chronic condition. Feelings of fear are among the deepest and strongest we have, and are very difficult to suppress. The melancholic temperament is a particularly passionate, stiff and secretive one and is only controlled with difficulty. The possessor often suffers from timidity and mental inhibition. From fear of humiliation, from sensitivity melancholic people flee society; they love solidly so that they can yield themselves to the palatable illusions of ego. They exaggerate their sins, and make them blacker than they are, and yet they cannot bear the idea of being sinners. This idea brings them to a condition of anguish. They are discouraged, depressed and would prefer most to die. They lack the self-confidence of the choleric

type, but they lack trust in God and good people, too. They bitterly reproach themselves, God and their fellow men, and their pessimistic outlook develops into a weariness of life.

The thoughts and feelings of the melancholic man revolve round the dear, the ideal self. He fears lest it should be polluted or suffer a humiliation; or, discouraged and despondent, he is convinced that it has already suffered an injury. It is for this reason that such a man feels happiest in solitude. There he can wrap himself up in his ideals, and his blighted ego can blossom forth again. No one has a larger supply of that jealousy which, as it were, springs from its ambush and pursues others, than the man who is both melancholic and choleric.

The melancholic man makes his life intolerably difficult and bitter. He has a lacerated and bleeding heart which he cannot heal. He distorts the bad which he finds in himself and others, making it bizarre; he loses contact with humanity, overlooks life's chief turning points, and has great difficulty in seeing his way to the life beyond the grave. In losing his belief in the goodness of man he loses also his belief in that of God. If, furthermore, the melancholic man is hypersensitive and loses control of his passions, he loses his rudder and compass – his self-control. He either consumes his nervous strength in the pursuit of unattainable ideals, only to end in a state of mental derangement, in which fixed ideas and delusions drive him on from one fear to another; or the volcano collapses, and the spirit abandons its brooding, and hangs on to earthly things: voluptuousness, avarice, pleasure seeking, envy, censoriousness. People given over to vices of this kind are difficult to cure.

The training of the melancholic person is unthinkable difficult, because so much unfounded and exaggerated fear and fearfulness, so much mistaken piety and morbid avoidance of society take their origin in this undisciplined melancholic temperament. And as so many melancholic people are solitary and nervous, the temperament has a bad reputation. It hides within itself its puzzling contradictions. And yet this temperament can be trained to be most useful, once the love of God and the goodness in the world become apparent to it. Men who are coldly melancholic with a dash of the choleric easily become dishonorable, sly characters. The fiery and oversensitive man of melancholic temperament has a choice between a struggle for sanctity and a sticking in the slough of doubt between the "whence" and the "wither", which ends in ennui or unbelief. The melancholic man is a puzzle to himself. Without love, his education is impossible. Of all people, he is the most in need of love.

The untrained melancholic man needs above all a center towards which his feelings must be directed and which should draw them from himself. He thinks too much of himself and must think more of God. That which he lacks in regard to the practice of the presence of God is trust. In the middle of his feelings of timidity there stands his deeply rooted ego. While the choleric man has too much self-confidence and in consequence knows nothing of trust in God and resignation to His will, the melancholic man has too many feelings of fear, pusillanimity, mistrust and discouragement. His pharisaic manner hides itself as deeply as possible in a nature disposed for piety; in this the cool, formal melancholic is blind. Not even God Himself can help a soul lacking any vestige of courage. To a man of this temperament the will of God is hard, and yet he can only find rest in unwearying resignation to God. Once he has found peace in the holy will of God the rigidity of his disposition is softened; confidence in God and love of the Cross prove its cure.

The melancholic must steer clear of criticizing others and seek his salvation in nearness to God. He must bear his cross with his Savior. If he is not understood he grows bitter against his fellow-men. In his sensitivity he keeps out of the way of others instead of trying to take them as they are and overlooking their failings. He must love instead of fearing them; he must come out of himself to seek

others instead of fleeing from them. He takes the dark side of life too seriously, abandons himself to distrust and every trifling rebuff and is too easily offended or irritated.

Love alone can cure him, provided he forces himself to see the good in his fellow-man, to overlook failings, to judge leniently, to escape from himself, to yield to others, to be tolerant of other people's views and to give his own a back place.

He is inclined to work with his emotions, with his whole mind; he easily frets his nerves. He must get away from thinking and brooding, for that is his passion. He must rather seek the loving will of God, read good books and busy himself in the service of others. The melancholic's real danger consists in his rigid feelings – he feels and ponders too deeply; he must therefore, struggle against his obstinacy and self-will. He is prone to narrow-mindedness and is one-sided in his piety.

The religious disposed melancholic needs clear objectives, for without them he is easily deceived by his feelings and is not easily cured of these illusions. He should constantly set himself to obey God's commandments and to love his fellow man. He is prone to exaggerate an emotional experience of God's presence, and overlooks the fact that this grace should make us prepared to offer to our Savior ourselves, our own opinions, our own wills; and to overcome obstacles in the company of our fellow men. Only the most profound humility and love of the Cross, only the utmost readiness to make sacrifices for others can save the hypersensitive melancholic from one sidedness and self-deception.

The choleric is a very difficult temperament when it is mixed strongly or even moderately with the melancholic, and is hypersensitive. The hypersensitivity results in both elements being unrestrained; self-control fails and the emotions have no master at all. In such a man, the aspiring blustering feelings of the choleric and the heavy, remorselessly driving feelings of the melancholic alternate in their dominion of the mind. He needs the best training and the utmost grace to remain master of himself; just such a man is always the injured carping, easily offended, harsh judge of society.

The cool melancholic-choleric person is quite a different type. He is the quiet, reserved, smooth character which one never gets to the bottom of. He is unfathomable and not easily accessible to grace. But once he has found the way to grace, he pursues his way along it with a steady energy. He is not readily disposed to the exaggerations and excesses of the fiery hypersensitive type. If, however, he gets wrapped up in a pharisaical piety, he is exceedingly difficult to teach. The timid melancholic person has to recognize the foolishness of him cramping feelings of terror or trample upon them in blind obedience.

VIII

The Re-Forming of Temperaments

Is a reformation of the temperament really possible? This depends at bottom on a person's spiritual and physical disposition. It can only alter with the latter. Climate, food, education, environment, work, profession, and anything else which influences the body and soul, affect the expression of one's temperament, too. The sanguine man of the south differs entirely from the sanguine man of the North. In youth the sanguine and choleric tendencies predominate, in age the melancholic. The vicissitudes of life may assist the person of melancholic temperament to make a

sudden break with his past, but only if he is predisposed for it. The possibilities of a reformation of temperament are greater in youth than in age. It is, however, possible at any age to eliminate superficial asperities and defects, and to develop the better sides of one's character. Of course, a striving for perfection and recognition of one's failings are necessary pre conditions for this improvement. Very many people are improved by the rough realities of life. In school and in their relations with their fellows, children are properly laughed at and so learn to control themselves. Education in manners, on love and in toleration soon wears off the worst of their sharp corners. Association with people of other temperaments and the reading of authors of different views help greatly. The sanguine person should read serious, profound books. Choleric and melancholic people should read books written by sanguine authors, in order to acquire the mildness and goodness of their temperament. Most useful of all is the practice of the presence of God and humility. Generally, however, people of a particular temperament seek out others of the same type, with the result that they only enhance their peculiarities. Among older people, especially in particular walks of life, both educated and uneducated, there are often stiff, passionate temperaments which are almost incapable of learning and almost impossible of reformation. They are often hypersensitive types, who passionately resent any attack upon their ego, feeling it as an insult, and who cannot tolerate opinions opposed to their own. These people are usually of either a choleric or a melancholic temperament.

To achieve complete harmony in a nicely balanced temperament a natural strength of will and self-knowledge are not enough; grace is necessary. It is only by an intense effort at reformation in the sight of god, and in submission to His holy will, that one sees the darker sides of one's temperament. Otherwise we exaggerate our good points, ascribe them to ourselves and overlook our defects. The strength for self-control, and joy in its exercise, must, therefore, be drawn from the love of God so that one may remain the master of one's feelings and find peace in the love of the Cross. The defects of temperament can only be completely nullified by kindness, by mild judgement of others, in whom one sees rather the good than the bad. Genuine, selfless, benevolent goodness is the crown of human nobility. It is the right attitude of mind, divine wisdom, a pure gift of the Savior, given by Him to those who walk upright in God's sight and who are ready to give up all for peace in Him, to sacrifice themselves utterly to him. Kindliness reveals itself in lovingly serving one's fellow men. Jesus refers to it in the words; "Blessed are the patient; they shall inherit the land." The Christians form the royal priesthood; they rule in serving all men.

PART TWO

Nervous Temperaments

“Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened; I will give you rest, and you shall find rest for your souls”

(Matt. 2:28-29)

I

The Assessment of Nervous Temperaments

In Part One the training of temperaments was only touched upon in a general way and briefly outlined. A deeper treatment will follow in this second part. Irritability is that characteristic of temperaments which it is absolutely necessary to consider. It makes self-training difficult for most people. It therefore needs very thorough treatment. The significance of irritability was pointed out in the third section of Part One. It gives the individual coloration and the colorful shading which make up the innumerable gradations of the same basic temperament, so that no two people are alike. Now the extreme sensitivity of the emotions must be regarded as the source of temperamental weaknesses, defects and aberrations, and recognized as the chief hindrance to self-knowledge and self-mastery.

The choice of the right, generally understood expression for this extreme sensitivity of the emotions is difficult. After a long search and much inquiry the word “nervous” was preferred, for practical reasons although this still undefined term does not quite cover sensitivity. Extreme sensitivity does not necessarily produce nervousness; if it is well under control, it can be an advantage; it belongs to those of refined soul, the proficient, and renders the possessors capable of really great things. In most cases, however, it remains out of control and leads to nervous irritability and nervous weakness. It is the darker aspect that I term nervousness. Hence, training in self-control must be deeply concerned with nervous temperaments.

Very many people are nervous or have an over irritable temperament; the majority are unaware of it or do not wish to be aware of it, as long as this over sensitivity of the emotions does not lead to morbid manifestations, striking perversity, or psychic inhibitions. Fiery temperaments are more prone to admit their lack of self-control, because they are more exposed to lapses than those of cooler temperament. When this unwholesome tendency is completely under control, the powers of the soul

are in ordered harmony and nervous manifestations no longer appear. The strength for self-discipline is absent in most people, and from irritability of the nerves they develop an excessive excitability. For self-mastery they need a profound knowledge of themselves and more help from the Divine Physician and more of His healing power.

Humble self-knowledge is extremely difficult for nervous people. Such people often entertain the illusion that they are more normal than others. They romance about their superior character and are extremely irritated by contradiction or blame. Some skim lightly over their faults, and are unaware that they are burdensome to other people; others, who are shy and of a deeper nature, see everything in serious and dark colors. The constant fear of not being taken seriously wounds them dreadfully. The nervous person is comparable to the weed, "touch-me-not". As soon as he admits that he is ill, and no longer whines about it, but bravely sets foot upon the curative path, he can be liberated. The nervous disposition may not be eliminated by adopting a sensible way of life, by schooling the will and by the application of grace, but it can be restricted within bearable limits, so that the innately nervous person is easily able to overcome his psychic disabilities, avoid loss of temper and patiently bear his cross for the good of himself and others. For this he needs a spiritual adviser. Self-training and grace can make a useful person of a nervous sufferer.

Nervously irritable people are seldom understood by their fellow human beings and are not favorably influenced by them. "It is not easy to lead people; to achieve even a little in influencing them for good is to do a great deal. The most useless of all are the words of those who – seldom masters of themselves – stamp with rage and behave with masterful arrogance. But the mild, modest and friendly manner of those who respect the freedom of others as something holy wins, even wordlessly, their goodwill and directs it to the goal." (Abbot Blosius.) Those who think that the temperamental failings of their fellow men are due to ill will are unjust and can scarcely hope to influence them.

People who cannot appear to others as they really are, because they are not masters of their nerves, and, consequently, are unable to hide their feelings, and who are driven hither and thither by every impression they receive, find other people unsympathetic and unkind, however good their intentions are. "People do not understand me," is the complaint of the nervous person. Bashful people of this kind timidly avoid their fellow men; the more fiery of them brood bitterly over the injustices they have suffered and, by sharp criticism of others, incite opposition.

Taking for granted that our own behavior is intelligent, we observe the apparent failings of others and condemn them without troubling to find out the reasons for their actions. We do not inquire of the circumstances or the intentions which might explain and excuse them. A single mistake will often provide a sufficient excuse to condemn a man outright, as though there were not a thing to be said in his favor. With a little goodwill and affection, one would find that the nervous subject certainly did not mean what others have taken him to mean; the thoughtless word, the quick unconsidered action, the exaggerated irritability was only the expression of a nervous, overstrained and uncontrolled emotion, a feeling too easily excited and therefore only checked with the utmost difficulty.

Since the nervous person often has a poor opinion of himself, and would gladly be other than he is, but cannot overcome his hypersensitive nature, he deserves our sympathy rather than our scorn. For a tolerant judgement and a charitable understanding of our fellow men, more is needed than intelligence. It requires much unselfishness and patience to take a benevolent view of a nervous person of melancholic temperament, for he responds to benevolence with mistrust and resentment. Nervous people are not to blame for their illness; they did not give themselves their temperamental disposition. Hence one cannot equip oneself with too much loving kindness when dealing with them. Certainly every adult is in duty bound to train himself with the help of God's grace. If we wish to help nervous people in this difficult task, sympathy with their weakness, a right mind and a kindly understanding constitute the only way.

Those who are concerned with the training of human beings are daily confronted with problems and puzzles. When Christ, the best educator of all times, preached the good news of His kingdom, He found ground of the most varied kind in the hearts of men. Some beat their breasts sorrowfully and turned from their follies; others resisted every influence: "Who is this man? Don't we know his father? What right has he to act like this?" While some hailed Him and opened their hearts to Him, others took offence and opposed Him. Why the passionate, wayward manner of one and the slowness of another? Whence the stiffness of the former and the suppleness of the latter? Whence the loyalty and conscientiousness here and the complete frivolity there?

Whence this variety in men's tastes, judgments and resolutions when God and the things of supreme value are at stake? Sober observations will bring us up against differences of temperament. Just as those who are tenderly excited are easily accessible to grace, so those whose excitability is untrained are closed to its influence. Sin, excess, envy, willfulness, anger, unteachableness, spiritual blindness and darkness of different degrees all spring from unchecked, instinctive excitement. There are excitements of a violent nature which are tenderer and more enduring, and which seem to have a right to existence. Others are deep and rude, but only transitory, and these lead more easily to penitence and change of heart.

God frequently seems to permit men to fall into grave sin to open their eyes, to lead them to repentance, to a true knowledge of themselves; for this is the beginning of all wisdom. The wise educator, too, must know the ways of God with faulty men, and be a loving instrument of divine providence. He must straighten the bent reed, not crush it underfoot. From blind and excessive impulses "the truth will make you free." The serious study of nervous, over stimulated excitability leads to a tolerant understanding of one's fellow men and to a just judgement and treatment of oneself and others. It is, therefore, not only a useful but also a necessary occupation.

1 Characteristics

Nervous manifestations are much more common among the present generation than one might think. (Note: the 2nd edition was published in 1946) Heredity, the struggle for self-assertion, competition for employment, an unbalanced mode of life, an undisciplined emotional life – all these have contributed to make of us a nervous generation which suffers from uncontrolled emotional excitement. The first essential symptom of a nervous nature is exaggerated sensibility. There is an inadequate supply of nervous energy for the moderation and control of a delicate sensitivity. Even in their proper channels the impulses are restless, violent, immoderate and prone to take the wrong direction. The noblest feelings are readily wounded and quick to rise in self defense. But the lighter and darker sides of nervous temperaments do not manifest themselves strikingly in every case. They are more sharply revealed only when exaggerated. A natural consequence of excessive sensitivity is premature fatigue, especially mental fatigue. It entails ill humor, depression – fertile soil for every variety of despondency and fear, the concomitants of a consciousness of inferiority. Uncontrolled emotional forces appear from the dark realm of the unconscious. In this the chief role is played by feelings colored by fear and boredom which impose a number of restrictions upon the life of the soul. A third essential symptom of nervousness is loss of energy together with weakness of will, especially in the face of things which inspire fear. The nervous subject lets himself go and acts in a moody or irascible manner, impelled by desire or displeasure. It is fear above all which hamstrings the will and robs it of courage.

The nervous subject usually seeks the cause of his failings and ill humor in the world outside him, in his environment. If he examined the make-up of his mental life, he would protect himself against his excessive excitability by equanimity, turn his attention from the things which excite him, and moderate both his enthusiasm and his depression. If he learned to recognize the direction in which his temperament inclined, to seek the golden mean, he would achieve much good in life as a man of delicate feeling.

Nervous unrest, too, characterizes the excitable temperament, and in many cases is quite tangible. The unrest does not always manifest itself, as it does in the case of sanguine and choleric people of fiery temperament. Among those of cooler temperaments, especially melancholic people, it remains hidden within, and only appears on special occasions. Nevertheless, it is transformed into wearing mental activity or, as fear and depression, it is very obstructive to good work. Far developed nervousness and advanced nervous weakness manifest themselves also in various mistakes and morbid symptoms. The man who seeks within himself, tranquilly and honestly, the basis of his mistakes in life, instead of ascribing the blame to others, will light upon weak nerves. This can be confirmed by other certain signs both in himself and others. Every nervous person, it is true, has an illness with its own peculiar characteristics. But in order to confirm nervous weakness, it is sufficient that one or another of the following symptoms appear: a feeling of pressure on the head associated with attacks of dizziness, when the ground seems to rock under one's feet; strikingly rapid mental and physical fatigue; excessive irritability; a restless urge to work; over-conscientiousness; an exaggerated deliberateness; excessive frivolity; an over-readiness to enthuse; wild imaginings; groundless despondency; feelings of inferiority; violent self-accusation; scrupulosity; skepticism; excessive reserve; an urge to avoid one's fellow-men; timidity; unreliable behavior; refusal to act on important occasions; trembling; a fixed stare; fear of the dark; fear of thunderstorms; restlessness and agitation; agoraphobia; anxiety over writing or speaking;

plaintiveness; inconstancy; changeableness with the weather; contradictoriness; violent temper. Behind all these is a mental trembling, a fear of losing some real or imagined advantage in life.

If one of these symptoms is obvious, it does not indicate purely and simply a nervous weakness, but points rather to the orientation of the temperament. If one seeks further signs of nervousness, appropriate to the temperament indicated, the pattern of the character will soon become clear. People are often surprised that a word, a sentence or a symptom reveals the exact condition of their mind, and describes their temperament in a way they could never have done deliberately. If on such an occasion one guides them kindly towards self-help, one often gains for them that confidence which is so necessary in the treatment of nervous temperaments.

One or another of the above mentioned symptoms of nervousness is often to be found in children, who are also particularly prone to nervous mistakes. One should be on one's guard about regarding these as due to conscious naughtiness. They are also inclined to rapid enthusiasms and just as rapid fatigue, distractions in class, waywardness, moodiness, bad temper. They become ill to escape difficult situations. Nervous headache and vomiting are well known. A marked reserve on the part of a small child is the characteristic of a delicately nervous melancholic. An early unyielding obstinacy points to a choleric melancholic mixture colored with nervousness.

If a person of hypersensitive nervous nature escapes the appropriate training in youth, he remains childish throughout life. The watchword of the small child is pleasure. He is urged by feelings of pleasure, restricted by those of displeasure. By older people he is often made the focus of their activity; he falls in love with himself and imagines that the whole world turns upon him. When he is refused anything, he is annoyed and gets into a frightful temper; he becomes obstinate and spiteful. Even to his mother he says, "Go away. I don't like you!" Persons of nervous nature do not easily give up this childish preoccupation with themselves. The most important task of education is to deliver the hypersensitive child from his over delicate and too clearly defined ego, and to train him to make sacrifices for others – to deny himself.

If this training is missed in youth, it is extremely difficult to make up for it later on, when the emotional life has become rigid. Even in old age the undisciplined nervous nature manifests a selfishness which it has done little to suppress. The nervous subject is suffering from a belief in the omnipotence of the "ego". He lives in a world of illusions and frequently goes to pieces on rocky shores of life. In general, the undisciplined nervous person is in constant search of pleasure. He has not got over this infantile urge and so adapts himself only with great difficulty to circumstances. He is one-sided in his pursuit of his favorite occupations and usually remains a solitary.

Sensitivity to noise and sudden collisions is not the only sign of nervousness; the most striking sign is a sensibility in the nobler feelings. The feelings of honor, fairness and truth among nervous people are very vulnerable, and release a volume of defensive desires of such violence that they often lead to serious crime. Just as nervous people are frequently seized and exalted by sensations of pleasure, they are rendered quite as readily almost helplessly miserable by feelings of displeasure. Along with an exaggerated vanity and a violent desire to be noticed, exhibited in their pushiness, they

manifest sensitivity, grief, fear, aversion, bitterness, wrath, harsh judgment and bitter criticism of others. They are contrary, revengeful or depressed, according to temperament. Melancholy, shyness and fearfulness are particularly dominant among nervous people of a melancholic temperament. When nervousness is well advanced, a mental oppression is apparent in which the subject is tortured perpetually with self-reproach and a consciousness of guilt.

The most profound characteristic of nervous natures is the persistent, urgent fear which colors their thinking, willing, judging and acting. Unknown to themselves, this fear underlies all their actions. An outward disquiet is often the mark of an inward condition. In accordance with disposition and temperament, fear can appear in the most unexpected places and have effects which are completely hidden. In some cases it appears as a crippling scrupulousness, in others as bashfulness, and in yet others as a fear of exposure. The vain man is driven to endeavor to create a good impression; he fears and avoids everything which might reveal his weakness. His fear of not being sufficiently noticed, of not attracting adequate attention, has the effect of making him defend himself when no one has dreamt of attacking him. While fear drives the melancholic man into himself, it stirs up self-assertiveness in the choleric man. A feeling of inferiority often underlies an abrupt and passionate utterance, a sharp and biting criticism. It is the fear of being hit in the most vulnerable spot which leads to extraordinary defensive moves and violent outbursts of passion. In this we see bitter, faultfinding cynicism arising from modesty, impudence from inward bashfulness, ruthless self-assertion from inward timidity. Fear makes a man over friendly, yielding, ready to make sacrifices; for otherwise, what might others say, and so harm one? Fear makes one jealous and repellent. Fear does all these things with the object of asserting the precious ego.

The simplest manifestations of fear (such as fear of the dark, of sickness, of pain or of changes of fortune) are neither the most common ones nor the worst. Much more serious are those that are hidden, that work underground and which express themselves in other ways, those which trick themselves out in the cloak of virtue or self-assertion. These obstruct a man in his best efforts. Anxiety, which is mistaken for virtue and conscientiousness, is of this kind. In religion, as the fear of God, it lays a most necessary foundation, but where it is exaggerated it constitutes the worst hindrance to the progress of grace. It is a sinister power emerging from the dark realm of the subconscious which reinforced with many other feelings, blindly influences by fear complexes the individual's conduct. Such complexes reveal themselves both on the natural physical plane (as in fear of open spaces, fear of writing, fear of blushing and fear of fear) and on the mental and religious plane (as in persecution mania, guilt mania, convictions of damnation, weariness of life, hatred of God, misanthropy and other perverted emotions).

A consequence of the fear colored character of the nervous subject is nervous haste and restlessness. This may be extraverted as zeal for work or introverted as a preoccupation. Fear is the driving force in both cases. Morbid haste makes the nervous subject superficial, leads to scamped work in his profession, to exaggerated place hunting, to one sided agitation, to a one sided brooding which ends in a nervous breakdown. Cold temperaments hide the inward restlessness of the neurotic while ardent ones expose theirs and so more readily reveal their disposition. The brooding of the

hypochondriac, the languishing of the hysteric, the mania of the hereditary criminal and the melancholy of the suicide are all manifestations of the spiritual restraints of a nervously disposed nature.

2 Origin

The primary and most frequent cause of nervousness is an inherited disposition of the nerves, which act as the tool of the mind. The circulation of the blood contributes more or less to the nervous symptoms. The blood mounts to the head of broody folk. Many hypochondriacs suffer from such congestion. The organs engaged in digestion or formation and circulation of the blood are also concerned: nerves, stomach, heart, glands. Diseases of internal organs often result in nervous disturbances and mental convulsions, stomach and intestinal troubles, heart trouble, especially cancer, digestive disorders and constipation. For curative treatment it is of primary importance to know these causes, for so long as the cause is not removed, the nervous mental condition is likely to remain.

But the nervous outburst is also often caused by an inner mental condition, i.e. mental depression, and then this must first be eliminated. Nervousness can arise from mental overwork, from unrelieved professional activity, from climatic conditions. In this connection there is the so called "tropical frenzy." It is not seldom the effect of a dissolute life. If these factors combine with a nervous disposition, a nervous breakdown follows from which recovery is extremely slow. Very acute mental disorders are often associated with this, and these require treatment by a doctor.

Excess of zeal in spiritual labors, with the best of intentions, leads to inward haste and outward disorderliness; in the rush of activity the subject allows himself no rest, no change, exercises no self-control, works late into the night, undertakes more and more work and allows himself to be driven by an unrest which consumes nervous energy. Further troubles come, and then, perhaps, some sorrow; this additional pressure leads to a collapse. At this stage people struggle in vain to gain power over their wills: they have left it too late. An exaggerated sense of responsibility in the melancholic man easily oppresses him inwardly and wears down his nerves. On the other hand, nervous disposition is itself the cause of restless activity, concentration on a single object and brooding. By its exaggeration of the life of the mind and spirit, it engenders disorders of the internal organs and their functions. The nerves are then affected once more by these disorders. Similarly, nervous dispositions are the ground on which the rank weeds of many vices and bad habits flourish. These cripple and inhibit the will in moments of violent excitement and passion, and weaken the nerves.

Sinners of this sort need very special handling and great sympathy. One cannot heal anxious souls by telling them that pride is at the base of their anxiety. In this way one only thrusts these poor creatures deeper into their self-torturing misery, instead of ridding them of an exaggerated and unjustified sense of guilt. Unfortunately, inherited timid dispositions are often made worse by a mistaken education, and the nervous are obstructed in all their efforts at self-expression. They are not the worst people that bleed to death on the road, because the content of their mind was poisoned prematurely by fear. We are to serve God not as slaves but in love, as His children.

Nervous weaknesses are easily brought out by poisons which develop in the body or are supplied to it. They weaken the nerve cells. If they are particularly strong, they produce immediate

nervous spasms. Poisons appear in the body as a result of long and persistent disorders of metabolism, constipation, infectious diseases, such as typhus, influenza, malaria and syphilis. Bad conditions of the nerves are brought about by the persistent use of noxious drugs intended to combat nervous manifestations. Even when taken only in small quantities they engender in time chronic poisoning. Morphine, cocaine, mercury and lead are among them. Stimulants used as luxuries, of which the poison content is small, will in the course of time produce nervousness in sensitive people, especially when taken in excess. Examples of these are alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, chocolate and cola.

3 Cure

Is it possible to cure nervousness? That type of nervousness which has been acquired through overwork, excesses or a one-sided manner of life can be cured, provided the causes are removed. An inherited tendency to nervousness, on the other hand, is irremovable. This fact, however, should not depress a sufferer, because the harmfulness of the situation, the mental inhibitions and the excesses brought about by struggle and training can be avoided. The nervous man must learn to rely on his better nature, to look boldly at the restrictive emotions and to steel the will against them. Unfortunately, many folk let themselves go and excuse their peculiarities by saying, "Well, it's my nerves." Many people find no experienced spiritual adviser, and others will not be advised. The cure of a nervous subject requires individual treatment, because each of them has his own kind of illness with its own particular causes. A natural attack upon nervousness must start by removing the physical causes and continue in the adoption of an intelligent and healthy way of living and a sound education of the will in self-control. In severe cases of nervousness the doctor should be consulted.

The tragic quality of the nervous nature, the one from which all its evils arise, is that it is mentally much too receptive of impressions which touch us deeply. The nervous person is too easily influenced, thrilled and depressed. Before he is aware of it, he is carried away. Hence, that feverish activity and perpetual restlessness which rapidly consume his nervous energy and make him tire rapidly. This rapid fatigue, too, has consequences which characterize the nervous subject. The tired person becomes monosyllabic, turns inwards, is irritable, moody, and egotistical and is unwilling to concern himself with anything but himself, his own troubles, his own thoughts, activities and emotions. Or he lets himself go and by his moods becomes a burden to his fellow men. The ill humor of an oppressed mind is a fertile soil for sensitivity, anger, moodiness, fantastic delusions, fear filled agitation, exaggeration and a hankering for solitude. People are too coarse for him, life is too hard, and sociability makes too great a demand upon him. If his nerves are rested he may become high spirited. The nervous subject reacts especially easily to the spoken, living, emotional word which stirs him to violent enthusiasms or to trembling fear, to warm ecstasies or crippling discouragement. The cool melancholic man, alone, seldom escapes his over serious, externally temperate nature, because he translates his inward excitement into ponderous thought. The cause of mental depression must first be sought. Once this is removed, nervousness is cured.

What can be done to nullify the effects of this hypersensitivity of the feelings, and especially of those which are tinged with fear? A clear knowledge of oneself would certainly break the force of this blind and distracting tendency. But where is one to acquire this knowledge unless it is mediated by a

kind and sympathetic friend? If you are nervous, then go and find an experienced and kindly counselor to whom you can speak freely of your mental state. Let him instruct and guide you. For, with the best intentions in the world, your highly developed sense of personality will delude you about your shortcomings, unless you have a guide; you lack the necessary repose to see yourself as you are. You will always think your ways are the best, for you know how well intentioned you are, and think you are only misunderstood by others. But since spiritual physicians with a deep knowledge of the nervous nature are seldom available, a book may provide some useful guidance to those genuinely looking for help.

Besides natural remedies there is also a very powerful one available, provided it is sought and properly applied. It is the power of God which heals everything and which streams out from Christ upon all who approach Him in faith and love. Christ brings us from Heaven the spirit which delivers us from the harmful results of Original Sin, not simply from our sins, but also from the disorder in our emotional life. He came not for the healthy but for the sick. He calls the weary and the heavily laden to Himself, so that they may receive the divine power which streams out from Him. Nervous people are just the sick, who, in a constant state of unrest, are tyrannized by agitated feelings and who long for peace in God. They feel more than any others the consequences of Original Sin. But God's Son became man to deliver us from this sickness. Christ is the bearer and mediator of God's spirit, the divine power, by which the sensual man is led by divine stirrings of a new love to God. The impulses are drawn from God and set upon the highest good, as soon as a man seeks union with Christ and communes lovingly with Him. God orders man's nature by the inpouring of His love, and so man regains the lost power of regulating his emotions, peace and harmony of mind.

Among people with nervous natures one frequently discovers those who are filled with a great longing for peace in God. They feel their inability to master their emotions more than do others. It is always painful and discouraging for a soul hungry for God to realize that in spite of the best will in the world, it makes little progress, and to have to admit, after years of earnest struggle that its goal is not reached; that between its ideals and reality a gulf exists which, with its own strength, it is unable to bridge. We Catholics lay great stress on grace, but few of us have a clear idea of its healing power; otherwise this power which comes from the Savior would be more sought after through an interior living with God; it would then come to full fruition through the change wrought by His influence.

As soon as nervous people seek the presence of God and are ready to recognize His will in all things, they experience quite a new feeling of peace of mind, where they were previously tormented with perpetual unrest. They are now capable of overlooking much that formerly disturbed them and which used to make them brood. The experience of peace in God rises like a wall against over sharp eternal impressions. It strengthens; it renders one insensitive, superior. As soon as the love of God begins to stir, the nervous man who is a prey to every impression can concentrate on his favorite subject, on God. Before any serious treatment, which turns disquiet to torture, one advises nervously distressed people to turn their attention to something which claims them entirely. Thus the experience of repose in God comes of itself to mind, has its tranquilizing effect, and by renewed resignation deepens the feeling of peace. The very anxiety of the nervous man will provide him with constant cause, once he has found peace in God's presence, to love and serve God.

The nervous man must seek the experience of repose because it is the beginning, the foundation of his cure. It is not only a defense against an excess of impressions; it is not merely a wall raised against an onrush of undesirable influences; it is primarily a means of deepening the otherwise too restless and superficial spirit. Repose yields self-knowledge, power, completion, warmth and courage. Repose is the first essential for seeing oneself and the things around one as they are; the nervous subject can do neither. Repose gives ascendancy, self-confidence. It is of special importance for the nervous person, because it forms the base from which the arch enemy, fear, can be engaged in battle.

Unfortunately the restless mind of the nervous person constitutes itself the greatest obstacle in the way of finding this sense of peace. Besieged by a swarm of impressions, he goes in search of diversions and distractions. He plunges into pleasures and work and loses more and more any inward supports he has in a whirl of external activity. He has no idea of where to look for his cure, for he does not know of rest in God. He sees quiet recollection as a torture; silence he imagines as a spiritual tyranny. No one is more horrified than a nervous person when faced with days of spiritual exercise.

The very prayer of the nervous man is accompanied by gnawing worries from within and without. His longing for peace and quiet cannot be satisfied so long as he fails to seek it in God, in the practice of His presence and in resignation to Him. Exercises, however wholesome, will only depress the nervous man and disturb him still more, if in them God is only preached as an object of fear. The grace of God's love will find no entry, through further castigation, into a mind already sufficiently tortured. If the nervous person is to be influenced more deeply by religion, the starting point, mental repose must first be reached.

Repose in God is the work of the Holy Spirit. Of this peace the apostle tells us that it surpasses all understanding. Already in the Old Testament God counsels us to go in search of it. God's peace is found in the trusting, loving tarrying in His presence; it comes from Him when we seek it in prayer. All that is likely to distract must be avoided. In his little book of exercises St. Ignatius prescribes that contemplation should be practiced in a darkened room. The body should be at rest. It may be in a kneeling posture, sitting, lying on the back or standing, whichever position best serves to tranquilize the mind. Steady breathing promotes repose of the body and mind.

The chief object is to lead the mind to repose in God. One should concentrate without restraint upon His loving presence. He is Himself the picture of eternal repose and silent peace. When one has acquired for a time the highest possible degree of inward peace, it is possible to contemplate the indwelling of God in the soul – to see that He has His loving eye upon one, that He is ever at hand, He whom one desires to please and to whom one wishes entirely to belong. On the solid ground of this peace, every sincere, devoted soul will experience an awaking peace of mind, the benediction of divine love. It will become conscious of union with God. The experience of peace will draw the soul mightily according to its disposition. "Come and taste how sweet the Lord is!" "Here indeed is the House of God, and I knew it not."

If the experienced peace is accompanied by loving, strong and aspiring emotions, lively natures are prone to yield overmuch to them, to the detriment of the silent repose in the holy will of God. They tire because they work overmuch with their minds. The more peacefully one yields to God, prepared to do His will, the more one's soul feels strengthened and encouraged by God's Spirit to renounce all that deprives it of its peace. It becomes aware of being drawn lovingly, of the blowing of God's Holy Spirit, of new joy, new courage, of new power to resist that disturber of peace – anxiety.

Saint Francis of Sales relates that in his youth he had great fear of being alone in the dark. Later on, however, when he had grasped the thought of God's presence, he enjoyed walking alone upon dark nights. God was with him and was concerned about him. Sister Emilia, Daughter of the Holy Cross, relates that she was by nature shy, but that with the first experience of repose in God, she completely lost this shyness and was able from that moment to consort with counts and kings with the utmost freedom.

The simple remembrance of this experience of peace is enough to restore courage and repose to the soul. Quite contrary to his former habit, the nervous person will long to be alone with God and will regard prayer and communion with Him as his greatest joy. Little by little he will find it easy, even during work, to keep his heart quiet with God. In his mental and sensual life he becomes simpler. A single great idea gets hold of him and steadies him, even when he is surrounded and attacked by hosts of external impressions. Restlessness will, of course, make its presence felt again and again and seek to drive the nervous man to hurry even in his communion with God. The active participation of the emotions in the divine consolation, which specially characterizes people of a deep nature, is prone to stimulate mental agitation and rob the soul of its peace. Then is the time to seek peace and seek it again, for it is the same old nervous disposition rearing its head once more.

People of a deep seated nature, who are introspective, are easily upset by a self-consciousness of guilt, by self-accusation and self-reproach, especially when they find it difficult to maintain themselves in God's peace. They lack a clear perception of their own weakness and of God's great mercy. They think that the experience of peace, to which they look back with longing, was the work of their own strength. They trust too much to their own activity and have too little confidence in God's mercy. In consequence their search for God and His holy will in all things is inadequate. The life of rest in God is achieved by the union of the will with His will as it is revealed in all the events and duties of the day. God's leading is experienced through the loving recognition of His presence, and through rest in His providence. As soon as a man is prepared to resign himself without reserve to his guidance, repose in God will become a lasting condition, in which he will learn continually to know himself more thoroughly and to dominate ever more effectively his impulses. The longing for repose in God is the star which lights him to a complete cure of his restless impulses. "They who allow themselves to be moved by the Spirit of God are the children of God."

II

The Nervous Man of Sanguine Type

Many people mistake nervous sensitivity for the mercurial disposition of the sanguine nature. As a result of this mistake some nervous children get a fundamentally wrong treatment. Is it really possible for a sanguine man to become nervous, since he experiences no mental oppression, and easily passes over all difficulties? Is it possible for Brother Lightfoot and Miss Gay Heart – those bright and cheery people who are indispensable at any party, who rouse their fellow mortals from their fits of depression, and enable them to forget their worries – to get on the nerves of others? They do not easily become nervous in the course of their lives, but they often are so by disposition. Nervous excitement can prove very troublesome even to sanguine people. Owing to the very good qualities in his nature, the sanguine man, when overexcited, can become so gay that in his ebullitions of wit he forgets all propriety and decency; he becomes a frivolous, high spirited pleasure seeker, and so, in spite of all his friendliness, he loses the respect of his fellow men. His shallow opinions are not corrected. He becomes more and more moody, irritable and contradictory. If his temperament is cool, he gladly escapes all strenuous work, complains of others and becomes more and more vain and sensitive. His optimism is baseless, and he gives the impression of being thoughtless. He is regardless of the dangers, to which he is exposed owing to his penchant for friendships, and the vain notions which kind treatment and flattery engender in him. If the sensual side of his nature is awakened, it is with difficulty kept in check. “An innocent kiss comes never amiss,” he thinks and neglects to realize the limits.

1 The Mixed Character of the Average Sanguine Man

Pure temperaments are seldom found. Sanguine people are almost always found with an admixture of the choleric or the melancholic. Nervousness as a rule facilitates the determination of the separate constituents of the mixture; the extremes show up more sharply. Just as the choleric-melancholic man experiences moments when either the choleric element tugs hardest, or the melancholic drags him into inconsiderate behavior of which he is ashamed, so that he never seems to find the mean between two extremes, the choleric- and the melancholic-sanguine man have like experiences. Neither finds the golden mean, if he is nervous; at one moment the frivolous sanguine element is on top; the next, the moody melancholic or the pushy choleric is in the saddle. The two extremes are as variable as the weather. Even if the erotic man of sanguine character does not fall completely into the passionate depths of the melancholic or into the violent rages of the choleric man – because his emotions are not so strong – his better side will often be obscured.

The admixture of the choleric effaces in him that kindness of heart which is otherwise characteristic of him. It increases so greatly his consciousness of individuality that his otherwise harmless character takes on a new importance. His zeal for work and achievement increases until it becomes pushiness. He thoughtlessly gives offence, shows violent and jealous rage. He is touchy and hates being corrected. He has no sympathy for others, and, like all nervous people, steers clear of

influence. He works hard but does not cooperate with others. His respect for existing rules is not great. He is much more concerned with what pleases him and fits in with his moods.

The superficiality of the sanguine man seems to be increased by an admixture of the choleric. This makes him unwilling to accept well-meant guidance and the good advice of which he stands in need. He thoughtlessly overlooks or forgets those things which he desired to do better or to alter. His fancies and his moods are no longer of the harmless kind formed in the purely sanguine man. His tempers, when offended, are more passionate, more lasting and revengeful. His boldness becomes rough and audacious. His ambitions are not so elevated as those of the purely choleric man, but he is enthusiastic about his ideals and his religion. He works more with the emotions. He is very prone to a general optimism which is not based on careful judgments, and he lends a ready ear to flattery.

If the sanguine man is blessed with an admixture of the melancholic, it is to his advantage. His kindness is his most marked characteristic. But the need for kindness and understanding will also be increased, and, since self-knowledge is rare among men, the melancholic sanguine person is always beset by an unsatisfied yearning. This is where nervousness makes him quite irritable. He suffers almost continually from the hardness of life and society. His wounded sense of justice often makes him ill. His fateful disadvantage is his everlasting complaining of not being understood and of injustice. This does him a lot of harm. He loses his best friends and his clear judgment of his fellow men. His weakness and helplessness become apparent. No one has any respect for moaners. What is usually the most attractive quality of the sanguine person is obliterated by the melancholic element. It is true that he seeks the company of others, but he does not trust them for long. If he is nervously disposed he easily becomes scrupulous about his health. Fear of the most varied kinds preys upon and takes hold of him, from agoraphobia and fear of derision to over-scrupulousness in regard to sin.

Both choleric and melancholic sanguine types suffer frequently from inferiority consciousness, but both go different ways to assert and assure themselves. The choleric element makes the sanguine man bold, pugnacious, noisy and pushy, or turns him into a flatterer, while the melancholic element makes him pessimistic and disgruntled. Neither of the types has the tranquility needed for judgement and a broad outlook. Both are often in need of a bit of good advice but find it difficult to grasp what they require for their cure.

2 Cure

Sanguine people of both sorts can seek the right standpoint. They should soberly consider their aims and ideals, the better side of their natures, with the object of cultivating these and abandoning their more blatant faults. If the sanguine person will not only help himself and be less touchy, but also submit himself to good guidance and try lovingly to be helpful, he can find pleasure in life and work, and become a really useful person. He will have to cultivate his good point – his kindness – and free himself from his unpleasant qualities. He must not let his will become stiff like that of the choleric person, nor lazy like that of the average man of sanguine temperament. The dangerous cliffs of inward anger and complaint must be avoided. Under all circumstances he must steer clear of superficial, unconsidered and over hasty action. Unfortunately, however, self-knowledge among such people is very hard to

acquire; they think their anger justified, because their sense of injustice is so strong, and they cannot easily forget it. Love of the cross is as necessary to them as their daily bread, but they fight shy of it. With their weak wills they yield gladly to their feelings and moods.

To the potent impulses of their feeling of pleasure and displeasure they must oppose the will of God. They must resign themselves to his guidance and to that of those who have their welfare at heart. Their consciousness of inferiority can be overcome by trust in God and the help of grace in the cultivation of goodness. Their complete cure, and especially the cure of their hampering fear complex, is only possible with the help of grace and trusting communion with God.

For the person of sanguine temperament the appropriate aim and ideal is to become as a child in relation to God and one's fellow man. The childlike mind is in fact the Savior's great requirement for entry into the kingdom of God. To be glad to be little in God's sight is the outstanding virtue in several saints recently canonized, whom the Church recommends for our admiration and imitation. A child can be taught, is obedient; it is aware that it is not intended to do its own will. The first thing the spiritual child renounces is, then, its own will, its own guidance, from which arise so much turmoil, so much unrest. It subjects itself in all things to the holy will of God. As it is aware of its own weakness, it gladly accepts the direction of others.

To acquire this childlike mind it is not necessary to spend a lot of time brooding and contemplating. One needs only to forget oneself and to entrust oneself inwardly to God and His guidance. To think of God's presence and His love with the idea of yielding entirely to His will leads of itself to forgetfulness of self, to resignation of one's will, and to living for God and one's fellow men. The childlike mind is a gift of the Holy Spirit who descends upon us when we are in the trusted fellowship of our Savior.

The meekness of a child is communicated to the character of these ever contented, ever happy, passion-free children of God, who repose in His arms, follow the impulses of His Spirit and have but one wish, one aim – to do His will. All the crowding worries and anxieties, to which the nervous sanguine man is as used as to his own breath, sink into silence. All the dependence on sport, entertainment, books, social intercourse and innumerable attractive things, is slackened, and losses no longer disturb. The childlike soul, devoted to God, treads in simplicity the path of duty, as God leads it inwardly, by the communication of His peace. It is untroubled by what others will say and think. In this inward peace body and soul develop properly.

There is no doubt that nervous natures sigh and groan in the consciousness of their lack of mastery over their emotional life. There is no doubt that they do not find that self-control, and the strength for it, which life demands, and so live unhappily and at war with themselves and their unsatisfied passions. There is, therefore, no doubt that it is they who soonest understand and long for the helping power of the Holy Spirit, the inward life of peace and resignation to God, through which the mind's emotions are quieted, ordered and balanced. But the step from a longing for God to grasping Him is a difficult one. The least that is necessary is the will to give up everything which the inward

possession of God and His peace demands. Many indeed know the way but do not take it. They carry their religion like a burden without knowing its power.

III

The Nervous Man of the Choleric Type

In accordance with the Creator's wise ordinance the human mind disposes of a marvelous world of secret impulses which are responsible for a mighty and important task in life's household. For on them the human being is dependent throughout his life, in all his thinking, willing and hearing, in his eating and sleeping, in his mental-spiritual as well as in his physical-sensual activity. They accompany every thought and give it its coloration or even its orientation; every act of the will, every bit of mental activity is linked up with these impulses. No one can assess or count in detail the movements of the mind. Their nature remains a secret and so does their origin. Yet their promptings and effects are with us at every moment without our knowing it. No part of the earth's surface is so undiscovered and so little known to man as his own mind. Up to the present, scientists are not agreed upon the names and definitions of these mysterious features.

The most blatant contradictions sleep peacefully together in the depths of the mind; heat and fire along with cold and water, gales and thunderstorms along with peace and tranquillity, good and celestial spirits along with the powers of darkness. They are all awaiting the moment of their awakening, either to afford their possessor excellent service or to sweep away the best of his life like a brook in spate. The thinkers of the past sought to throw light upon this dark world and divided the whole mass of impulses into two groups. One great group strives to enrich life materially, and is known as the *appetitus concupiscibilis*; the other group is engaged in warding off evil and is known as the *appetitus irascibilis*. Body and soul have a will to live and are provided with the necessary apparatus for their maintenance and self-defence.

The *appetitus irascibilis*, the defensive mechanism of the instinct for self-preservation, is common to all temperaments and is, in general, the one which is restrained with the greatest difficulty. Irascibility, in particular, is characteristic of all nervously irritable temperaments; it is their unconscious reaction to the nervous feeling of inferiority. All temperaments come under discussion in this section, therefore, so that irascibility may be treated in its proper context. It occurs here because the irascible temperament is particularly striking in nervous subjects of the choleric type. As his character is based on his mighty ego, he is the more animated with feelings averse to everything which injures his self-esteem; the more he is set upon ruling and "having his rights." He is fundamentally pugnacious. If his temperament is a fiery one, he does not master the blind instinct of irascibility. Instead, he is ruled by it,

so that rage, fault finding and condemnation often swallow up his better nature, and he does not shrink from untruthfully calumniating his opponents.

Sensitive people of choleric and melancholic temperament suffer in being vulnerable in their deepest and noblest feelings: those of truth, justice and honor. They rage with a violence which blinds them. In those with warmer temperaments, this can release so much inner obstinacy and defiance that, when excited, their better natures, even their consciences, are submerged. They commit unashamedly criminal acts in the blind conviction that these are justified weapons of defense. Otherwise good people are often so transformed, become so stubborn and wayward, when their sense of truth is deeply wounded, that they go their own ways, hating their fellow-men, and will be taught by no one. This proves even more true when some injustice results from the falsehood. The injustice need not be suffered personally. The feeling of injustice has made many a man who was well educated and of good family into an unteachable pig head, a thief and a murderer. Only a little agitation is necessary to wound the noblest feelings of whole masses and to stir up class and race hatred. The usual effect of a wounded sense of honor is mischief and devastation, since it mobilizes the whole army of defensive feelings. The soul is agitated so that complete darkness falls upon it, and the human being is made capable of every unkindness, every perversity, of violent rages and crimes.

Wounded feelings have two qualities; they blind, because their air of being justified misleads, and they obscure so that the sufferer, inaccessible to light and truth, yields to his instincts without so much as raising a weapon against them.

1 The Irritable Disposition

I want here to discuss the irascible temperament and must therefore, deal in particular with the *appetitus irascibilis*, the aggressive apparatus of the mind, which is set in motion as soon as the possessor is checked in his desire for any spiritual or sensual good. In this emotional apparatus, irascibility is the basic mood of the mind. Even before the intellect has clearly recognized the enemy, the mind is already disturbed by some sensation and some unconscious fear. One is disposed to be mistrustful of something, some person or some occurrence. Among children we often notice unreasonable revulsion when they are faced with strange people or new situations. Adults, too, often have feelings of attraction or dislike when they first meet strangers, before so much as a word has been exchanged with them. One's judgement of persons and events differs in accordance with one's sympathetic or unsympathetic approach to them. One is easily offended by harmless words or behavior; one is filled with a mute anger without being able to say quite why one is on the defensive. The dark room, the secret laboratory, in which "Madame Fear" is on the look-out for every trace of an attack upon the precious ego, seeking to develop it in pictures, is the subconscious. The more sensitive the mind and its instruments, the sensory nerves, are, the more delicate is this emergent fear. Nervousness consists in emotional sensitivity. The subject is impelled by his emotional impressions to form over-hasty, one-sided and exaggerated ideas. Fear and anxiety are caused by the over stimulation of the feelings. They then obscure the intelligence and cripple the will. But in the nervous nature nothing is so quickly or so easily stirred as the defensive feelings with their agitating fear and their blinding zeal for a seemingly just cause. Not being noticed, being contradicted, a bit of disrespect, a

little setback, an obstacle, an unfriendly glance, a petty annoyance, a mere nothing, will often serve to upset a nervous person and awaken in him ill-humor, aversion, anger and resentment.

There are nervous people who simply cannot emerge from the discontented and irritable humor. Anger then becomes a chronic illness which is communicated to the most harmless things and occurrences. Through these spectacles many see things other than they are. They bark like a watch-dog at everyone. If the healthy person finds it impossible to master at all times an irascible temperament, the hypersensitive, nervous person's rage produces absolute devastation. There are nervous natures which are always on the defensive though no one is attacking them. The irascible element is in the saddle and has swallowed up all the better emotions.

The nervous irritability of modern man manifests itself primarily in the predominance of the irascible temperament. Irritated minds are infectious. When a dog starts barking, the dogs of the neighborhood join in without knowing why. Furious obstinacy, a morbid desire to criticize, a deliberately incited class hatred – all these make modern man unhappy. It is as though God were leaving them to rage, and they were being punished with blindness. Those suffering with nervous tension feel that their ideals of independence are everywhere threatened and plunge into a fatal mental condition.

Children get angry with their parents when they ask them to do the slightest thing. Pious sons and daughters abandon all respect and criticize openly and ruthlessly the views of father and mother and reprove them harshly, as though their parents were doing them an injustice in holding different opinions. For their part, the parents no longer dare to set right ideas before their children because they fear their scorn. These children are always violent and they think they are doing admirably, that they are acting manfully and independently, in telling their parents the plain unvarnished truth.

Pious people who miss none of the church services, and who belong to charitable sodalities, find something to blame in everything. No god, no pope, no emperor, no bishop and no spiritual adviser can do right for them. They are not interested in a cause as such; they merely want to air their disgruntled feelings. They regard themselves as those heroic beings whose judgements are infallible and who have the pluck to speak plainly to anyone. This morbid demeanor is catching and one person learns it from another.

Where does it all lead to? The person who, owing to his mood of irritation, can only see the shadows, and who either does not perceive the light or avoids it, plunges into or lives in darkness. He tears down instead of building. In others, too, he destroys the faith which is necessary if they are to receive the Holy Spirit, the Light of God. Peace leaves their souls; joy disappears. Subordination becomes difficult; discipline and virtue decline. Love grows cold; hatred for others increases and apostasy from God is well on the way. "Happy is the man who is not scandalized in Me," said Christ to the Pharisee.

If one tells irascible people they do wrong in exciting themselves about failings and unkindness's, they cannot forgive one. They are surprised, for they firmly believe that everything they do and say springs from their love of truth and justice. Their injured, nervous self-love always clothes

itself in a semblance of holiness. They so gladly tell themselves and others that theirs is a righteous anger against sin and wrong, and that they are filled with zeal for justice and the things of God. They do not perceive that it is a much greater mistake to exaggerate the failings of others and, in a state of nervous irritation to struggle against that which must be endured.

Even the good pastor will thus become sharp with his flock. With his exaggerated defensive attacks he gives pain; where he should heal, and probably wishes to cure, he inflicts wounds. His harvest, therefore, is nothing but hardness, stubbornness and resistance. His unfruitful labor only serves to oppress and excite the nerves; he becomes embittered and exasperated. He means well, but he does not realize that his irascible temperament, making him brusque and harsh in his self-defence, destroys everything. He calls it zeal, but the forces behind it are his wounded feelings, his morbid, noisy self-love. Of course, superiors must at times rage and punish, in order to maintain order and discipline. There is nothing wrong with this zeal, so long as it is not confused with the rage which emanates from wounded self-love and nervous self-righteousness. Real righteous anger proceeds from the Holy Spirit, not from one's own nature; one loves the person one is punishing and wishes him well; one is not satisfying one's own desires and is, therefore, led by a quiet mind. Righteous anger against sin does not destroy love and pity for the sinner, and does not consist in subjecting him to humiliating reproaches. It shows him the unhappiness from which it wishes to save him. The good pastor must be prepared, like his Master, to put up with and forgive, without resentment or anger, every failure, every ingratitude and every wrong. In this love of his enemies he will master his nervous uneasiness and excitement; he will keep his good sense and his prudence, and, one day, his work will be rewarded. Christ grew angry with the buyers and sellers in the Temple, but His disciples rightly called His outburst zeal, not anger.

The irascible feelings of self-defence are in themselves a necessary and useful natural disposition. Even facile, profound and delicate sensitivity is by itself a perfection which is found in noble natures. Sluggish emotional reactions signify a sluggish will. Dead wood, lacking fire, is good for nothing. But almost all nervous people, with their hypersensitivity, are much too frequently excited in a way which dulls their intelligence and their judgment. Violent choleric natures easily explode and are quickly discovered, while silent, ideal melancholics rage with more persistence. Their resentment is more wearing to the nerves. The nervous subject's dominating fear exaggerates the danger which is to be warded off. The more easily and the more deeply we allow impressions to affect us, the more do feelings boil up within us. We grow warm and enthusiastic for some good object, but we also grow easily afraid and angry, and put ourselves in readiness for defense: we become excited, angry, agitated, discouraged and spiteful. We feel ourselves so threatened by an imaginary danger that we lose our peace, and our reason no longer operates. We succumb to the impression, and are no longer open to sober judgment. We deliver ourselves over to our feelings and our intelligence seeks to justify them. We allow ourselves to be driven by the blind instinct which we share with the animals i.e. jealousy, fear, anger, hatred. But men who yield themselves entirely to a feeling of enraged self-defense are far worse than animals, because they rage and hate, know they do it.

Every person has his own way of being angry and defending himself. Every soul has an easily vulnerable spot. All temperaments have angry emotions. But I am thinking primarily here of the choleric man's anger, because it bursts out suddenly like a thunderstorm. Irascibility, however, also

includes the devouring resentment and fury of the deeper temperaments which coolly and quietly await the right moment to defend themselves against the enemy. All men have been equipped by God with the means of defending themselves, and this defensive battle plays an important role in life. Sometimes it is a battle for one's daily bread or for position and honor; sometimes economic, social or political struggles are involved. Battles are waged in the cabinets of the rulers, in the clubs of politicians, in the mansions of the rich and in the hovels of the poor. It is everywhere the same irascibility, from the mildest dislike to the most violent hatred, from secret envy to downright antagonism, from ill-humor to blazing fury, from secret cunning to open rage. No one is free from irascible feelings, and many are unaware that their unhappiness springs from their inability to control them.

2 The Blindness and Sinfulness of Anger

Nothing obscures the human intellect so much as the blind defensive emotions of bad temper. A bad tempered man accidentally kicks a stone or the corner of a wall and immediately reacts violently. He curses the stone, kicks it and so senselessly gives vent to his indignation. But he is not satisfied with making the inanimate object feel his spite; anyone standing about must feel it also. He blasphemes, uses and strikes anything that gets in his way. Temper is stupid, and is like the raging of an animal. How the bad-tempered man can rage when something does not go just as he wants or when he is contradicted. He pulls faces, often shows his teeth, rolls his eyes and barks at others. But not all bad-tempered people get beside themselves in the manner of those with fiery choleric-sanguine natures.

Deeper temperaments swallow their rage, and ill humor, resentment, antipathy, hatred and indignation take up their residence within them; in their minds a frightful mixture of spites is brewed. Some in silent fury slam the doors of the house, or smash any object that comes into their hands, or express their rage upon dumb animals. Others shun society because of their hatred for mankind. Woe to those who get in their way! Everything that others do is twisted and distorted. Everything which these deeply-wounded, sensitive and inwardly raging people see has only one side; they are quite convinced that some injustice was intended. Rage and hatred in some can go so far that they appear to have lost all reason and all conscience. What they think and do is born of revenge and darkness, and often amounts to the most blatant injustice, the worst misrepresentation or the grossest slander. Bad tempered bitterness of heart is a sinful condition. "He who does not love his brother," says St. John, "is in darkness".

They say that dogs that bark a lot do not bite. One observes something of the same thing in people of irascible temperament. The temper which immediately expresses itself outwardly is often much less dangerous than the temper which is stifled. Antipathy corrodes the deep mind of the melancholic man. It begins with a slight sensitivity. Brooding magnifies the trifle and a monster gradually takes shape a chronic antipathy, a devilish hatred. The world is seen through the distorting spectacles of ill-tempered bitterness, and people are judged to be other than they are. These bitter people find malevolence everywhere, even in those who untiringly wish them well. It is hellish to have to live with such perverse people. Their own lives are a burden to them and they make that of others intolerable.

No other temperament is so blinding as that of the bad tempered man who avoids the company of others. The tenderest and noblest natures are often exposed by their disposition to concealed anger. Who lights more easily upon the failings of others than the profound and idealistic person of melancholic temperament? His ire, his ill humor, is so tough and obstinate, just because it is directed against errors and unkindnesses, and so seems to him justified. He is easily offended in his ideals and sentiments of justice, truth and love. His sharp judgment is exaggerated and his avoidance of his fellow men is disastrous to him. He does not perceive that his temper is his chief fault. He should first pluck the beam out of his own eye before trying to pluck the splinter out of the eyes of others. His rage originates in inward passion, and so he lacks the will and the judgment to improve himself. Others are to blame for his irritation; others are doing him and injustice. Nevertheless the cause of his behavior lies in his own disposition, in his own uncontrolled nature.

The ambitious man in his sensibility will endure no defeat, no humiliation, no attack upon his ego. The very shadow of a setback excites him. It is for this reason that his tempers are so frequent and so severe. The choleric man wants to dominate; he intends to intimidate others, to beat them down with his barking rage, and so he seeks by noisy stamping to stifle his own fears about his power. Under no circumstances will he alter his will and his judgment – hence his outbursts when contradicted. He often defends himself stoutly before anyone has attacked him. Those who lust for power are fearful for their kingdoms and are jealous about every trifle, are envious and flare up at any moment. As soon as even the shadow of an opponent appears, the irascible self-defensive reaction is set off and the opposition is stormed down with insults, sneers and slander.

The greater the ambitious man's love for some bit of property, the more violent are his reactions. In his rage, the ambitious Aman had a gallows erected for Mardocheus who would not bow the knee before him. Avaricious people are immoderate in their complaints and rage over earthly losses. Sensual people are always vying with others for social favors and sensual pleasures. Cain was enraged with Abel merely because he was better, and he was so beside himself with rage that he did not scruple to murder his brother. Anger is the handmaid of the strongest and deepest passions. These passions so get hold of people that they are blind to love, kindness and mercy. Anger is the antitheses of the best virtues – patience and mercy.

This condition blinds a man to his own nature especially when it is supported by morbid nervousness. No one is quicker to excuse himself with the words, "I can't help it; I'm made that way," than the hot-head. But the sensitive person has another way of excusing his anger: "He wronged me." The easily awakened defensive reactions of jealousy, sensitivity, resentment and revenge very easily take the reason prisoner, and are always plausibly excused. Bad-tempered people cannot find time to see and judge themselves as they are. If they could only see how their eyes sparkle, what faces they pull; if they could only glimpse their minds reflected so unreasonably, so lovelessly, so frightfully in their eyes; if only they could see how many sins against charity reside amid this spiritual darkness, their aversion for and anger with the imagined enemy would find new objects to hate in their own egos and the ugliness of their souls.

The worst thing about anger is that it blinds one to the grace and love of God. The ill-tempered person who does not overcome his aversions and his resentments is inaccessible to reason and is hardened against human and divine goodness. Forsaken by God's grace he falls into many sins and becomes daily more incapable of recognizing his delusion. Grave sins of the flesh are easily recognised, and often, through remorse, turn out to be the starting point of a new life. But the many unkindness's and spiteful actions springing from anger, are seldom recognised, and repented of. The irascible person is just as strong a believer in his offended rights as in the wrongness of others, which he magnifies. It is always other people who are wrong. He never manages to see that it is his ill-temper which renders him to be irritable and prone to offence, that what lies behind his bitterness and censoriousness is his nervous character. The others should alter! It is true that others have faults about the nature of his anger is out of all proportion.

His very piety often strengthens such a man in his errors. It tends to hide still more his real character. The Pharisees believed they were righteously angry with Jesus. How much true virtue and innocence is suppressed by this false and blind zeal! How many saints have been persecuted by people who have imagined they were working for God's glory! The secular spirit has been furious with the spirit of God since the Fall. The spirit of God and that of the world are two opponents struggling for the soul of man. With its external piety, the secular spirit uses for this struggle the most frightful weapons of persecution, while the spirit of God uses patience, meekness and benevolence, and returns good for evil. Like Christ, all His disciples are at war with a world of anger.

Few people fight anger, because they do not recognize it as a fault, and do not suspect that it is the real enemy of their souls. Patience is the modest violet by the wayside which blooms unnoticed, because many who rage and storm think themselves manly, strong and virtuous. And yet patience originates in strength while anger is born of fear and weakness. Patience emanates from love and understanding, anger from passion and blindness. Patience is the fruit of God's Spirit, anger, the fruit of the flesh, as the apostle says. Patience is wisdom; anger, stupidity. "Every fool will be quarreling" (Prov. 20:3). "It's a fool's heart that harbors grudges" (Eccl. 7:10). "Fools betray anger on the instant, when prudence would pass the insult by" (Prov. 12:16).

So long as mankind exists, blind anger will be responsible for more sins and crimes than anything else. "Man's anger does not bear the fruit that is acceptable to God", writes St. James. "Cain rebelled against wisdom when he did foul wrong, and by murderous spite against his own brother compassed his own ruin" (Wisdom 10:3). "Cain was much enraged and his looks were lowering" (Gen. 4:5). He had heard God's warning: "Guilt will lie at thy door." The Pharisees were filled with hatred for Jesus. After He had been condemned to death they continued to spit upon Him and strike Him in the face. How frightfully must Jesus have suffered from the blind rage of men! Anger and envy are as old as mankind. Members of the same family envy one another and are ill-tempered. We find the like passions among the citizens of a country, and, of course, between different nations. Anger plays a large part in every quarrel, dispute and war. "Neither anger nor blazing rage knows compassion."

The whole judgment which Christ calls down upon sins against charity applies to anger: "I tell you that he who is angry with his neighbor is in danger of the judgment!" "An unmerciful judgment will

befall the unmerciful" was already the burden of the Old Testament. Jesus tells the parable of the servant who was thrown into the eternal prison on account of his lack of compassion. "It is thus that my heavenly Father will deal with you, if brother does not forgive brother with all his heart." God will be angry with us in the same degree that we are angry with our fellow men. "In the same measure that you measure it will be measured unto you." This anger of God often strikes man even in this world. "Anger leads to destruction." "What is more crushing than stone, more burdensome than sand? A fool's ill humor" (Prov. 27:2). "If you are always backbiting and worrying each other, it is to be feared that you will wear each other out in the end" (Gal. 5:15).

3. Anger is curable

The irascible temperament cannot be eliminated; but it can be got under control, though with nervous people, this is very difficult. The first rule is Know yourself! Study carefully the lives of your fellow men and realize how much damage your irritable temperament has already done to you. You have often offended friends and forfeited the favor of many good people. You have often wondered why you were not appreciated as you could wish, and why your successes in society were so scanty. You have often had the feeling that you were more feared than loved. Have you not considered why it is that many people avoid rather than seek you out? Have you not already forfeited much of life's joy? Do you not think that the possible cause of all this is your complaining, your censoriousness, your harshness, your manner of defending yourself against attacks and contradictions, the ease with which you lose your temper? Added to this you are perhaps pushy, or you steer clear of others, especially those set in authority over you. How many over hasty decisions have been due to your inward rage and abrupt judgments! Of how many unkind words and actions have you been guilty in life? Were they due to your rage against the faults of others? Whenever you were at loggerheads with your fellow-men was not your own undisciplined character at fault? Yes, you will find that most of your follies will have to be put down to your short temper, your resentment.

Yet so long as the hothead goes on saying, "I can't help it, I'm made that way," there can be no question of a cure. So long as the gloomy meditator sees the reason for his bad temper in the errors and injustices of his environment, and steers clear of others, his irritability will get a stronger hold upon him, and he will continue to wrong others by his false judgments and his touchiness. The first condition of a cure is self-knowledge and insight, together with a genuine determination to fit into society and to unlearn the habit of getting angry.

Even the worst of hotheads can master his irritability to the extent of avoiding the grossest of follies. "Just keep quiet!" That was the solution of the famous Caesar. When his anger rose at some insult he counted up to twenty before he gave his answer. Counting gave him the required moment of quiet. In association with mild and patient people it is, of course, not difficult to be even tempered. But to remain quiet in the company of angry excited men is a sign of inward strength.

The second rule is: *agere contra*, or harden yourself against your sensitivity. You will be cured when you bear patiently that which goes right “against the grain”. Do not fear humiliations: they are a great good and are necessary for your cure. But do fear your soul’s worst evil – that nervous anger which leads you into darkness and blind acts of unkindness. “He who does not take up his cross and come after Me,” says the Master, “cannot be My disciple.” He who moderates his overweening ambitions and is content with humiliations will find the Holy Spirit through Christ in prayer. And the spirit of God is joy and peace, which overcome anger.

People of nervous temperament are unwilling to carry their cross. One fears for his health, and in this regard, everything which people suggest causes him anxiety. Another is tortured by worries about what people will think; he sees much in the wrong light owing to his envy and jealousy. Others find that their behavior is not sufficiently appreciated and are constantly offended without knowing why. Others again take offence at the disorder and the errors of their environment. Thus every temperament has its sensitive spot where the *age contra*, the hardening process, the self-mastery, must begin, if a cure is to be effected. Success in recognizing the sensitive spot can only be attained by a genuine striving for self-improvement. The man who has not the courage to accept humiliations or to make an offering of himself to God will never conquer his blind rage. Nervous fear completely tyrannizes the man who does not learn to despise and break with it, even though this means waging war upon his own nature. Fear is overcome as soon as one acts in spite of it, doing the opposite of what it impels one to do. God’s warning in these words applies to the hothead: “Quarrel not with a man of quick moods” (Ecclesiastics 8:19). “Never let a quarreler, a man of angry moods, be thy friend; go thy way, and let him go his; ill habits are soon learned, to the sudden peril of thy life: (Prov. 22: 24 & 25). “A gentle answer is a quarrel averted; a word that gives pain does but fan the flame of resentment” (Prov. 15:1). “Skillful is he who has skill to check his tongue” (Prov. 17:27). Sad to say the virtues of gentleness and patience are not in the dictionary of modern education. They are the most difficult virtues to practice but are also the most uncommon, for they are not greatly respected by worldly people. The Apostle advises the resentful man not to let his anger find a lodging in his mind: “Do not let resentment lead you into sin; the sunset must not find you still angry” (Eph. 4:26). The man who, because of his touchiness, keeps away from others will only become more resentful. Hence it is that Christ demands reconciliation without delay.

A third important rule for the cure of anger is: do not think of others’ failings; seek rather the good in your fellow men. “Do not seek revenge, or bear a grudge for wrong done to thee by thy fellow citizens” (Lev. 19:18). Unfortunately we see our neighbor’s failings more easily than his virtues. The basic law of charity is to see first the good in people and to overlook their weaknesses. Most of our anger is awakened by seeing the faults of others, especially when we are affected by them. To notice the faults of others and straightway forget them – for they are not so badly intended – and to think of the good in them: this is what silences anger, gives rest, joy and peace to the soul, ennobles the mind, has the gentle effect of a magic power upon one’s fellows, and makes one godlike. To see only the good means to think well of all, to judge and speak kindly of them. This is obviously what is meant by treating others as one wishes to be treated oneself.

The spoiled ego raises so many objections to this obviously reasonable demand of charity, and wants to make so many exceptions that the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is frequently misinterpreted. It is not enough to suppress the rising anger against one's neighbor. If the man who is prone to anger wants to master himself he must aim higher. Christ demands from His followers love of their enemies, the suffering of injustice, even the rewarding of evil with good. The love of one's enemy is not merely a counsel of Christ, it is a command. Jesus calls it His commandment, a new commandment. It is not new because it was not known in the Old Testament, but because the law did not afford the necessary inward strength to achieve it, because, without the grace of Christ it could not be kept. Already in the Old Testament the spirit of God says: "Hungers thy enemy? Here is thy chance; feed him. Thirsts he? Of thy well let him drink. So doing, thou wilt heap burning coals upon his head, and for thyself, the Lord will recompense thee: (Prov. 25:21). Christ sets the commandment to love one's enemies in opposition to the traditions of the Pharisees, whose piety was pitiless and loveless, and therefore inadequate for the kingdom of God in man's soul. "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'Thou shalt not kill; if a man kills, he must answer for it before a court of justice.' But I tell you that any man who is angry with his brother must answer for it before the court of justice, and any man who says 'Raca' to his brother must answer for it before the Council; and any man who says to his brother, 'Thou fool,' must answer for it in hell fire. Go home therefore, and be reconciled with thy brother before bringing thy gift to the altar." "If any man has a claim against thee, come to terms there and then, while thou art walking in the road with him; or else it may be that the claimant will hand thee over to the judge and so thou wilt be cast into prison. Believe me, thou shalt not be set at liberty until thou hast paid the last farthing." "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you that you should not offer resistance to injury; if a man strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek also towards him; if he is ready to go law with thee over thy mantle, let him have it and thy cloak with it; if he compels thee to attend him on a mile's journey, go two miles with him of thine own accord. If someone takes thy property, do not demand it back!"

The Christian should be prepared to give up earthly property rather than quarrel over it. Love and peace are more important than worldly goods. "You have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and insult you, that so you may be true sons of your Father in heaven, who makes His sun to shine on the evil and equally on the good, His rain fall on the just and equally on the unjust. If you love those who love you, what title have you to a reward?" (Matt. 5). Will not the publicans, the heathens and the sinners do as much? Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect, merciful, as your Father is merciful.

The love of one's enemy is the strength of the Christian, his aim, his perfection and his salvation from a temperament prone to anger. Even though few reach or try to reach this goal because it is or appears to be against human nature and therefore impossible, it is one of Christ's commands. Christ has the right to make this demand, because to everyone who comes to Him, who lives with Him, He gives the power of the Holy Ghost, the spirit of love, which by grace changes our minds completely.

We find the apostles and early Christians practicing that which Christ asks. "That you quarrel among yourselves is already a fault. Why do you not prefer to suffer some injustice? Why not allow

yourselves to be cheated rather? If anyone thinks he is obliged to quarrel, let him know that no such custom is found among us, or anywhere in the church of God" (1 Cor. 11). "Men revile us, and we answer with a blessing, persecute us, and we make the best of it" (1 Cor. 4:12). But Paul too, indicates the Holy Ghost as the giver as the giver of patience and gentleness. "The spirit yields a harvest of love, joy, peace, patience." "The effects of corrupt nature are quarrels, jealousies, outbursts of anger, dissensions" (Gal. 5). Love, then, is the power which frees men from anger, and this love is a gift, an effect of the Holy Ghost, which Jesus communicates to us when, thirsty, we go to Him, when we live in His presence. The obvious consequence of this is that those who are given to anger must seek union, communion with Christ.

We are clever enough in earthly things. We obtain help when our own strength is insufficient. If only we could be as clever in the things which pertain to our soul's salvation! If only we could see the damage that anger does to us, we should soon act more wisely, and set higher store upon that inner life, that communion with Christ, than upon anything else in the world. People with nervous natures would soon be freed from the burden of their rebellious world of emotions, if they went trustfully to the Savior and found love in sweet communion with God. What joy there is for the dissatisfied in the sacrificial love of Christ! The Savior promises always to hear the prayer of love. "Ask and the gift will come, seek, and you shall find; knock and the door shall be opened to you. Everyone that asks, will receive, that seeks, will find, that knocks, will have the door opened to him... Why then, if you, evil as you are, know well enough how to give your children what is good for them, is not your Father much more ready to give, from heaven, His Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (Luke 11: 9-13)

IV

The Nervous Person of Melancholic Type

"Great is the anxiety all men are doomed to, heavy the yoke each son of Adam must bear, from the day when he leaves his mother's womb to the day when he is buried in the earth, that is mother of all" (Eccl. 40:1).

In these words the Old Testament utters a profound truth which those who are nervous and sick in mind may take to heart. Who will render their suffering and its higher providential purpose intelligible to them and so help them to bear their cross? Will the consolations and sympathy of men avail? Self-knowledge is, of course, urgently needed, otherwise moralizing becomes for them a two-edged sword, and all kindness and sympathy have but the effect of drops of water on red hot iron. Yet

self-knowledge by itself is not enough to achieve a cure in the case of most nervous people. They lack the strength, courage and energy to apply what they know in the fight against their inclinations. Nervousness is always associated with great weakness of will. Is there a remedy for strengthening the wills of those with a nervous nature? Most decidedly there is. There is a Soul Physician who came down from Heaven who calls all the weary and heavily burdened to Himself, so that He may heal them, instill peace in their hearts, and restore to them strength and joy by the power of His Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, few know of this source of spiritual strength and few seek it. It is obvious that anyone who goes in search of this strength recognizes his weakness and wants to be cured. Now one goes to the doctor who does not feel ill. If he does not go, it is because he thinks he is well. It is for the sick that the Divine Physician of souls came, not for the healthy.

1 The Melancholic Person of Shy Disposition

One of the commonest features of the nervous melancholic temperament is shyness. It can be slight, or it may be so serious that it causes such frightful anguish of soul that the sufferer is continually oppressed. Shyness is always inborn and very frequently associated with the basic mental temper. It can be strengthened during life by a false education and overcome completely by a good one. Signs of it are visible in childhood; among small children it appears in the form of shyness in the presence of strangers, fear of the dark, etc. The shy person is always very sensitive and easily hurt.

If this temperament is mixed even slightly with the choleric, the possessor is able to defend himself against shyness and get himself regarded as very bold. Walking through the forest on a dark night he begins to sing and whistle as though he could talk everyone else to a standstill. He wants to overcome his feeling of inferiority by his noisy behavior. If he feels defeated he strives by raging and storming to master his inward shyness and fear. It is not easy to make a person of this type understand that his behavior, which is often quite unconscious, results from an inferior weakness. We do not usually associate people of this occasionally violent and noisy disposition with shyness, even though at times shyness characterizes their every action.

The shy person cannot appear outwardly as he would like. He is greatly hindered in doing his best, is almost always misunderstood and often plays for years a role which is quite alien to his nature. He has a feeling of honor which is too sensitive, too easily affected. He is inwardly constrained by fear of defeat, of self-accusation, of not being taken seriously, of not being welcome, of not being appreciated. This painful, subconsciously active force has him in its power and makes him shy, confused, clumsy, inwardly excited and almost will-less. It oppresses the mind and so influences the imagination, the thoughts, judgment and behavior. The fear of not being what one would like to be, and of being incapable of doing what one would, affects the whole mind and depresses it frightfully; but fear is sometimes limited to particular hallucinations which tyrannize the individual once they have the upper hand. In accordance with the disposition or the education of the subject an *idée fixe* develops from this fear. He cannot help becoming painfully embarrassed when confronted by others, superiors in particular, when in public places, or when seen leaving public lavatories. He has to blush when looked

at, when writing, before starting some important business. He fears for his health if he eats or drinks certain things.

There are often quite unreasonable fears about which any child would laugh, such as agoraphobia, fear of germs, fear of writing, fear of trembling. For all that, these fears agitate the victim profoundly. They gain so much power over him that he is helpless in face of them, for they claim his complete attention, prevent him thinking clearly, dominate his actions and restrict all his better faculties. One can tell such people how foolish they are and that they should not let their imaginations get the better of them; but it is all of no avail, for their reason is in chains and their will powerless. A thousand proofs and reasons are not enough to demonstrate to the frightened subject, who often trembles physically how utterly unfounded his ideas are.

This subconscious fear takes on a variety of forms, which are with difficulty recognized as conditions of restraint, among people of serious and noble mind. The melancholic who is ideally disposed has a marked feeling for what is true, beautiful, good and virtuous; he often holds exaggerated ideals which are unrealistic, which can never be achieved in practice, but which are the cause of much mental depression. His feelings are easily frightened, hurt, repelled, embittered and discouraged. The man of choleric temperament, who is offended, stamps out and relieves himself by his criticism and bitter reproaches, but the melancholic swallows the bitterness, flees the society of men and magnifies the annoyances, especially the faults, which he and others have committed. In his discouragement, he yields to the dark powers of his subconscious. If the shy person would unburden himself instead of shutting up his feelings inside, many of his imaginary fears would be nipped in the bud. But he is distrustful, his ideals are rarely understood; they are, in fact, usually misunderstood, wrongly judged and treated, so that he loses his belief in himself, humanity and God. He is obdurate in the face of every educative influence.

In shy people doubt, conscientious scruples, absurd ideas about their sins and confessions spring from the fear of not being and doing what they out and might, while they see everything, even their virtues, in a dark light. Fear makes use of every apparent ground to hold the reason down. No confession has been a good one; contrition was lacking, the self-accusation was not sincere or the mention of extenuating circumstances rendered the whole thing valueless. The hallucination keeps the sharpest look out for every sign of weakness in order to dominate the field. A person with a different disposition can scarcely imagine what such tremulous people suffer, how bad they appear to themselves, how frequently their whole bodies tremble with agitation. It would be a completely wrong and superficial conclusion to attribute such conditions to confession. Non Catholics too suffer just as frequently, if not more frequently, from scruples about their failings. Properly used, Confession in fact cures a large number of nervous symptoms. It is here that the value of the Sacrament of Penance is apparent to the experienced confessor.

Unwise teachers and many well-meaning mothers frighten shy children by terrifying stories and exaggerations of failures, faults and sins. The tender conscience of a shy child can thus be ruined for life before he has made his first Confession. "See that you do it properly! Terrible things will befall you if you don't make a good confession!" For a shy child such terrifying warnings made his confession a

fearful experience to which he goes only tremblingly. The terror so inspired sometimes makes him avoid the confessional altogether. A lady of fifty admitted that from her youth up she had never gone to confession without trembling at the knees, and that the very thought of it so agitated her that she became incapable of work.

In adolescence, innate shyness easily assumes strong outward forms. The human being, as a grown up, has a greater longing to realize his ideals and to fulfil his duties. It is then that he feels more strongly the mental inhibitions, the fear of being unable to be and do what he ought. For many, too, there comes at the same time temptation to sin – to be dishonest, or to go astray sexually. The shy person now carries the first sin on his conscience as a profound experience. The more he thinks of it, the greater becomes his fear, his shyness, about speaking of it. Words, the right expression, fail him and his exaggerated fear closes his mouth in Confession.

If shyness was unknown up to that time, the effects of a bad conscience now make their appearance. The feeling that he cannot look others straight in the face, lest they should read his guilt in his eyes, now takes a firm hold of the shy person. He fights despairingly against the passion which has been awakened, but fear cripples his will and he plunges deeper into the morass. If he does not find a gentle confessor, if he is treated harshly and so wrongly, his mental conflicts become chronic, and are succeeded by severe mental depressions which have a shattering effect upon his soul's condition. The individual can now only see the consequences; he is unaware of their real cause – fear. A frightening experience they had in their early years often becomes permanently lodged in the subconscious of shy children, upsetting their emotions and affecting the whole of their later lives without their knowing it. This experience becomes their guide and ruler in dreams, judgments and thoughts, and hinders the development of their best qualities.

2 The Struggle against Shyness

The shy person should first clearly appreciate the importance of this powerful feeling for his whole life. When quiet and at rest, he should allow to pass before his mind's eye all that he misses as a result of his disposition. He should consider the pitiable nature of his action when, from fear of disgrace, he fails so often to achieve his heart's desire. He should think for a moment of a person who is afraid of the water and who has to bathe. What difficulties he makes! He first dips his toe into the water but quickly withdraws it. He goes on trying like this until a good friend, taking pity upon him, pushes him in. With a cry of fear he plunges into the cold water, but climbs out again with a feeling of well-being. The next time he goes in, it is easier, and at last he learns to love the cold, wet element. The person who does not dare to act owing to a fear of disgrace will achieve nothing in life, and he will lead a sad existence. Just as the cold water steels the body and toughens it, disgrace cures the sensitive mind of the shy person; it is more necessary for its strengthening than water for the body. What can one begin to do with those people who seem to have come into the world without a skin, and who scream and run away as soon as they are touched?

The shy person should realize that fear does not disappear of itself, but that it can only be eliminated gradually by taking a firm stand against it. But it will not go as a result of simple efforts of the

will; fear must first be subjected to criticism as the parasite and enemy. One must learn to see that the feeling exaggerates reality, that a disgrace is by no means so bad, is in fact a healthy experience for the soul. One should then seek all the rebuffs that are brought by the daily round, the common task, and accept them quietly as valuable bargains. One should go to visit unfriendly people in order to say a kind and appreciative word to them. One should associate with friends from whom one can expect a bit of pungent wit or a sarcastic remark. One should frequent difficult situations in which one has reason to fear blame.

As soon as shyness begins to make itself felt, the resolution should be there to rush it with a firm hand and with irony, to give way to no single situation but rather to seek out the sort of situation which makes one afraid. One should treat all the problems of bashfulness, crowding upon one with such serious looks, like silly childish habits, in order, by self-denial and self-conquest, to rid oneself of them for ever. Since human intercourse gives shy persons so much trouble, they should go out of their way to cultivate kind thoughts and good manners. This will increase their self-confidence.

Compulsive restraints of the most varied kinds will only be overcome by treating the ego with a firm hand, well aware of the consequences of not doing so. A certain young student was so afraid of having to repeat one year of his course that he was considering suicide. He would have entered the water if his teacher, guessing what was happening in the poor lad's mind, had not quietly explained to him that it was no disgrace and that it was of great advantage for his later development. What a lot of people are subject to this powerful fear of unpleasant happenings! How many act unreasonably and, if they do not go as far as suicide, commit some of the greatest follies of their lives!

Shyness and terror of disgrace constitute for those who are striving to live the greatest and the most obstinate obstacle in the way of finding God and His peace. Once it is overcome, such people make rapid progress in the spiritual life. For it keeps the mind in a state of unrest and is, in an obscure manner, the mainspring or the accompaniment of all the perverse actions of nervous people. It is mankind's greatest and commonest enemy and has to be fought tooth and nail.

Unfortunately few are aware of the power and devastating effect of shyness on their lives. It drives the choleric person to act in his noisy violent manner, the melancholic into his depressions and the sanguine man into his acts of jealous cunning. The best method of cure is a moral hardening brought about by enduring repeated defeats. Out of the hiding place of comfortable solitude into the cold, invigorating bath of life! Away with the exaggerated views of one's own importance! Is it likely that one alone judges rightly; has a special lease of good sense? More respect, more faith in the good sense and charity of others. Away with exaggerated fastidiousness and high falutin' ideas and into the harsh reality of life! Life it is which heals.

He who wants to be cured must first want to overcome the enemy – fear of disgrace and self-depreciation. This fear will not be vanquished by intellectual arguments, by persuasions, by running away, by change of job or by self-accusation; it will not be overcome by making scrupulous confessions, but by a straightforward admission that the root of all evils, the blind emotion, is completely pathological and abnormal, and will only be defeated by looking it straight in the face and despising it

for what it is. The most profound humiliation a man can endure is to admit that he is not normal and will have to pattern himself on others; but the man has very great courage who bears this cross patiently.

If the shy disposition never quite disappears, the bashful person can become quite a normal human being so that no one perceives his inward struggles. He can even render his feelings of timidity quite powerless and achieve great things, if he seeks his salvation, rest and strength in close communion with God and in complete resignation to His holy will. "The bridegroom led me into his wine cellar and ordered all my emotions," says the bride of God, carried away by love. Love brings order among the emotions, which have been in a state of confusion since the Original Sin was committed. The Holy Spirit is the all-healing power which enters every soul that asks.

Shy, sensitive souls are specially fitted to apprehend the effects of grace, of God's love. Once they are drawn by God, the load on their mind becomes the weight which drives them to Him. Once the nervous melancholic has had the experience of rest in God and enjoyed its healing effects he takes the road to inward living communion with God. He then feels as much at home in the world as only the saints can. He sees how his inner weakness has been the means which he has been led to God.

Up to the age of 16, children can be cured of their shy tendencies by sensible teachers; the child's mind is soft and can be molded. But after the age of 16 – sometimes earlier – the emotions grow rigid in their habits and accept formative influences with great difficulty. This is especially the case when education has failed to break the obstinacy and the nervous tendency to think of oneself as of unusual importance. If it is difficult to get hold of nervous children, it is even more so to seize upon adults. But what human science can no longer achieve is still possible to the grace of God, provided always that receptivity for it has been preserved, and that love is sought in the heart to heart communion with God.

3 The Depressed Melancholic

One often finds periodically recurring anxiety of conscience and profound depression among shy people of melancholic temperament, too. These gradually settle like an opaque cloud or a strange dark power upon the whole mental and spiritual life of the sufferers. The most obvious signs are usually self-reproach and self-abasement of a harsh and exaggerated nature. Such people often have the feeling that they have failed in life. They feel that they are quite useless and are weary of living. The depressions usually begin in some external shock to their circumstances, in some profound disappointment to their hopes, some sudden anguish or sorrow, etc. Their mood swings between extreme uneasiness and downright apathy. The memory of their former happiness, or of the beautiful ideals they once held, increases their misery. One consequence of these conditions is very frequently a fear about earlier confessions.

Mental depressions are the lot of every melancholic, of every nervous person and indeed of all men. They are natural disorders which are transitory and recur without assistance. They can arise as much from a superfluity as from a lack energy. For example, extremely creative people are often very depressed before beginning some new work or before giving a lecture. The depression ceases, however,

as soon as the lecture or the work is begun. Others suffer the same sort of thing after some special effort. Everyone knows that these are merely passing phases about which one need not be concerned.

Depressions have a deeper effect upon shy persons if they are linked up with some shock to the nervous system. The body too suffers from metabolic disorders. The intestines are slow in action, appetite declines; the whole body is tired, enervated; the eyes have a dull look. The thoughts dwell on certain gloomy events and the tendency to brood is strong. The will is almost powerless against the ideas which obtrude themselves. Ideas of discouragement and fear recur like clockwork and seriously disturb the mind.

The mind is hypersensitive. If the person hears a sermon, only the part of it which awakens fear makes any deep impression. He sees faults where there are none; he fears events which will never happen. He imagines himself so bad that he thinks he feels his utter worthlessness. Every negligence is a sin, everything he utters is a lie, every temptation a crime. These conflicts obstruct quiet judgment and distinction between simple natural excitement and consent to sin. Those who are depressed seek enlightenment concerning their doubts and fears in reading, and only plunge further into the dark, because they only see in the book that which increases their fear. Others begin by making exaggerated confessions, and after every confession their fear returns in the form of a doubt about their confessor's good opinion, or whether they explained themselves adequately, whether they glossed over something, and so on.

Because during this period the nerves are over-stimulated, and the natural sensitivity is abnormal, the most serious emotions of sensuality set in, and are often linked with completely perverse ideas. The diseased emotional life expresses itself in spontaneously occurring images and ideas which are opposed to love, God and morality. All such bad thoughts, desires and spontaneous behavior are the effects of a morbidly-depressed, over-excited mind. There is no ill-will, no real fault in it all. In fact the victims suffer greatly under these conditions. Nevertheless their anxiety leads them to see deadly sins there. "I desired it, I sought it, I persisted in it. I found a certain pleasure in it, and I knew what I was doing." With such words they insist that they are really bad, are indeed criminals and incur God's anger. Many go so far as to see in all the events of their lives some punishment from God. With such people the fixed and perverse idea of guilt has already become a rigid structure.

The malady of such nervous people is exceedingly difficult to cure, because excessive shyness and weakness of will hinder many from unburdening themselves, or because distrust renders every bit of good advice useless to them. Others talk to everyone of their condition but only with the object of moaning, not to obtain help. Hysterical persons of this kind are altogether incalculable and can seldom be convinced of their sick condition. Many timid people actually go to the door, and more than once, to ask for advice, and fail to knock. Sometimes they enter but cannot find the courage to say why they have come.

That which makes this trouble worse, at least with some melancholic people, is their inability to find people who understand them. Furthermore they are usually very distrustful and will not believe those who could help them. A certain ability to sympathize is required to get into the minds of these

poor sufferers. People are inclined to laugh at those who are mentally sick. They are passed over scornfully with such remarks as: hysterical scruples about health, conscientious scruple, *idee fixe*. As a consequence of this, these nervous people are condemned to a sort of inferiority, of which they become the more conscious because, as a rule, they are gifted people, and have an all too delicate sense of honor which is quickly and deeply hurt. They manage deadly with the customs and usual laws of mankind. They sorely need a particular judgement, some special spiritual guidance with which they are seldom favored.

Owing to their weariness of life and frequent despair they would prefer not to exist; they complain of their sad lot, and in their dreadful anguish they see in death their only deliverance. For nothing any longer avails them, not even religion. The very thought of their religious duties disturbs and excites them. The thought of Communion often brings on sleepless nights. Prayer is a dreadful torture to them because, when praying, their gloomy moods come on and are even worse than usual.

No tongue can tell the tortures they suffer, and if we want to get some idea of the despair of the damned, we have only to examine such mental conditions. If ever a sick person needs human and divine sympathy, it is one who is mentally sick and suffering from depression. But how seldom is he understood by his fellow-men! If God were no longer merciful, what a pitiful state would be that of these His creatures, who are often driven by persecution mania into mental hospitals, or by weariness of life, to suicide.

3 The Cure

If the nervous malady is well advanced a doctor must be consulted. There are shy melancholics who cure themselves by an intensive study of the facts and by intelligent moral hardening. But few are in this position. Most of them need the advice and help of others. It is here that the spiritual adviser has a great and difficult task. He has first to make a very careful study of the case by a gentle and loving questioning of the patient, who is a bad judge of himself. He has then to convince him that, owing to his state of depression, his judgment is no longer objective. The melancholic must be made to see that the views he gets while depressed are biased by the disorder and cannot, for this reason, provide a reasonable basis for behavior. It is rather consoling to know that in the early stages of depression the moods periodically come and go. In some cases they only occur a few times in life; in others, annually; in yet others, every month, and are even linked with physical weakness. If they are not vanquished in their early stages, they become chronic.

These nervous disorders of the emotional life must be fought with a clear understanding and self-mastery. The sufferer must know the nervous melancholy is a condition that never quite disappears. He has to be content with this fact. He has a life burden, a cross, with which he can cope once he knows and learns to control himself. This is his task. If one lives a healthy and well regulated life, such dispositions can become the source of pure pleasures. The dominant spirit decides whether the moods govern the man or the man the moods. How many people have acquired burdens during life by means of which they have at last reached proper maturity! How many have been stamped with the

seal of nobility by suffering, and how many have discovered the way, through suffering, to a deep experience and understanding of the world and men.

Humility, self-sacrificing patience and charity, which for normal people is an ideal goal towards which they must struggle, is a necessity for the nervous person, for without patience with himself and others, without moderating his desires and his judgment, he simply cannot live. Since he cannot do as he would like, he is forced to endure and to bear patiently, and to seek the greatness and worth of his life, not in doubtful externals but in the deep values of love.

The deep melancholic, who is most prone to depression frequently has special talents which can be employed in the spheres of the intellect and religion. He has for instance great sensibility, deep seriousness, powers of spiritual recollection, a ready sympathy for others. Once he has recognized his weaknesses and clearly understood how to refine and moderate his emotions, his tendencies, which so easily distract him, can also become really useful. How many important people, educators, poets, authors, and saints have been real melancholics, have endured terrible depressions, and yet have produced the greatest works! Think of Alban Stolz and St. Alphonsus! They were matured in the fire of this suffering. Who in fact is spiritually more rich – the superficial, carefree living sanguine man, or the deeper melancholic for whom, through suffering, the height and depth of life is revealed? Who would really exchange for the light hearted, superficial gaiety of the one, the painfully won knowledge of the depth and seriousness of life of the other? This mysterious understanding of the meaning of life in this world and the next will only be granted to those who sincerely strive and are humbly content with the gifts God gives with the burden. Sad to say, many take no advice and will accept no teaching. They become bitter towards God and men, follow their impulses instead of combating them and so ruin their lives. The melancholic man has the greatest need for religion and the nature best attuned to it. And yet one finds that people with this temperament turn away from religion and develop a strong antipathy for everything religious and especially for certain external religious observances. The practice of Confession is a stumbling block for many; for others it is the person of the priest or the harsh discipline of a teacher which gives them a false impression of Christianity and disgusts them. All over-emphasis of certain observances, all compulsory attendance at rites are felt to be extremely distasteful by the nervous melancholic. They arouse his irritation, so that he denounces the hypocrisy of church goers and generalizes from the faults of the individuals who wound him. The cause is judged by the personalities it uses, and the wretched sufferer avoids and flees religion, the real character of which he does not know, and which should be the one great remedy for his depressed spirit. He is very religious, but goes his own way, because he cannot endure the external forms and religious customs of the community.

While people of a different temperament attain to the inner meaning of religion by way of the outward observances, the melancholic man must first grasp the ideal, the kernel, the essential in religion, and then learn to appreciate and understand the point of the externals. Christians more concerned with externals or sermons based only on morality, have no influence upon the nervous melancholic; or, if they have, they only inspire discouragement and fear; they do not entice and lead to Christ. But a sermon starting from the truths of religion and dealing with peace in the holy will of God, the helping grace of the Holy Spirit, granted to us in communion with Christ, and the knowledge of the

Crucified, has a very beneficial effect. Once the sensitive melancholic has grasped the true nature of religion, he easily becomes a religious guide for many others.

Besides these nervous melancholics of a serious disposition, one finds also some of a shallower character produced by an admixture of the sanguine. They seek to satisfy their strong religious feelings by an excess of devotional exercises. They seldom grasp the true nature of religion, the genuine, strong and patient love of God and neighbor. They are very fond of complaining of their woes and the wickedness of the world. When seriously depressed they are more helpless and unreasonable than those of the more serious disposition. They stand in need of a blind obedience to their spiritual guide; if they do not get it, they can scarcely be helped. Hydrophathic treatment and mental specialists only produce temporary improvement in their condition. They often manifest an excessive piety, but this is horribly disfigured by sins against charity, touchiness, readiness to take offence and silent stubbornness. We often talk of bigotry, meaning thereby a well-intended but falsely directed piety. This kind of religion is quite incapable of leading to a cure of depression.

Among the remedies for nervous melancholy the most important is a clear knowledge of the mental disposition, which as a result of functional disturbances of the emotions, is abnormal. There must be no game of hide and seek about this, for the more honest a man is with himself, the more concerned he is to find out the truth, the more certain he is of a cure. If the mental sufferer sees the cause and context of this trouble in its nervous character, he is on the way to victory. Few manage to achieve this self-knowledge entirely on their own. The nervous sufferer, therefore, needs a guide who is honest with him. He should not be merely a friend, but also a father who has the courage to point out the faults. A man who will not accept such an adviser and guide gives up his chance of self-knowledge and cure. The character and temperament of a nervous person have distinct facets which the sufferer himself always overlooks.

The nervous person is unable to do what he would. His exaggerated plans to be virtuous have to be replaced by the realities of the attainable. Aspirations towards holiness have to be altered withes curtailed, hopes abandoned. The man's life and professional ideals have to be brought into harmony with his natural powers, character and ability. To fit himself modestly into the will of God is the starting point for the great deeds of the nervous subject. A clear, honest knowledge of himself concerning his abnormal gifts renders him patient with himself and others, and just in his judgment of himself. When suffering from a mental depression, he avoids action as much as possible, and awaits patiently and prudently the time when the depression will have passed. The effect of a clear and honest assessment of himself is to show the sufferer that the conditions of fear and the delusions do not simply pass by, but must not be allowed to take the place of the better self, the spirit, the intelligence and the will. They are strange companions which turn up in the emotions and the subconscious, and which by being ignored can be tolerated, combated or vanquished. One has to learn to endure these bad moods like physical suffering, like a headache, like a temporary paralysis. One should not ascribe any importance or good sense to them. The waves of depression soon pass away when one sees them for what they are, morbid, excessive agitations of the emotions. Recognise, then, your temperament, your passion, your character, good and bad, and depression has already lost sinister, blind power over your spirits. You will no longer blame yourself for what is merely a pathological state.

Self-knowledge is difficult to acquire. It is doubly difficult for the nervous person. It is not that he will not, like the chloric, admit his failing. The melancholic sees his impulses in too dark a light; he does not distinguish them from will and intelligence. He needs more experience to be able to see the difference between spontaneous emotional ideas and actions and those which are deliberate and freely willed. He needs a higher standpoint from which to judge. Advice has only a passing effect, unless the sufferer is lifted right out of his depressions by an inward experience of feelings of a contrary nature, or by the effects of the Holy Spirit upon his emotional life. The most rapid and most profound self-recognition is brought about by the experience of rest in God. This awakens the strongest feelings of joy, of exaltation and of confidence. The most certain road to a cure, therefore, is to set one's heart upon the nearness and love of God.

It is their depressions, with their associated discouragements, fears and doubts which hinder the grace of God in the souls of depressed people, whose aspirations and confidence in God are thereby brought to naught. The religion of Christ is the commonest remedy for nervous people, but not every kind of religious activity is suitable. Religion is contact with God and rests upon belief and confidence in God. "There is so little faith in the world," says the blessed Cure of Ars "that one hopes presumptuously or despairs!" Confession does not cure the depressed person, for he simply cannot judge his sins aright. In so far as Confession is concerned he must submit blindly to the direction of an experienced confessor. Self-examination is for him only an endless torture, and at the end of it he is less aware of his sins than at the beginning. For a melancholic of this type there is only one method; to use a general form of confession specified by the confessor, at least in regard to the sixth commandment. If he summons up sufficient obedience and trust to desist from the long and detailed confessions to which he is addicted, and sticks blindly to the prescribed formula, his cure is already on the way.

Further, depressed people of melancholic temperament should not read indiscriminately every spiritual book but only those which excite confidence and faith. Those that whip up feelings of fear should be avoided entirely. Fear is the chief enemy which slumbers in the subconscious, ready to fill the spirit with everything which frightens. The soul of the sufferer bypasses the truth and fastens upon torturing fears. Such people select from most sermons the fearful element, and fail to hear anything which awakens faith and confidence in God.

There are people whose remorse prevents them from coming to life, who exhaust themselves in self-reproach and never grasp that true repentance lies in charity, in new deeds, new resolutions, in courage to do better than one has done in the past. Nature restricted in this way would continually turn life back and do everything again, as though everything was not restored in the present new born love of God and one's neighbor, as though every moment did not give and opportunity for making amends. Remorse and self-reproach, as ends in themselves, constitute a weakness, an obstacle, a nullification of that power of love which urges to action. There are people who become enraptured with self-reproach, who like to wallow in remorse and who are always accusing themselves of having no remorse. Those who reproach themselves are always looking gloomily into the future, as though they had a revelation that everything was going awry. The sensitive person must not allow himself to peer into the future or to indulge in self-reproach. He must base his life on the present and upon the will of God.

The basic exercise of his religion must be peaceful resignation to God's will. He usually creates for himself an ideal of life. Is this plan also God's plan? God, too, has intentions for every human being. Are they in agreement with yours? You have high ideals of the good. Have you overlooked in this connection the sick state of your mind? You want to make great, heroic sacrifices for your neighbor. Does God desire these sacrifices? Yes, they are good, but does God want them of you? You have a number of religious exercises. They are good. Does God want them? You would like to serve God in a religious community. Is that also God's will? How do you know whether it is God's will or not? God has given you certain dispositions and laden your nature with many weaknesses. What did He intend by that? He meant you to find your ideal life there, to approve the talents He gave you, and bear your weaknesses. It is your cross to be unable to do as you would. In God's sight what matters is not what you do but how you do it. He does not count crosses, but lays those upon you which are for your good. "For those that love God all turns out for the best!"

The divine light in which one recognises the will of God is peace, that inward spiritual repose, which is content with all that God sends it in life, which is mild, patient, gentle in judgment and obliging in its dealings with common humanity. The nervous melancholic must be gently drawn away from his eccentric religious and moral ideas into reality, so that he takes life as it is. He will then see that his great and truly valuable work lies in the little tasks of every day, in his profession, in his good thoughts and judgement of others, in being helpful and in the conquest of his wayward disposition. He can be led by this means to the highest degree of holiness, whatever his vocation or social class. The one necessary condition is that he bears constantly in mind the nearness of God, who is ever ready to bless him with inward joy the moment his heart is set upon the renunciation of his own desires and resignation to the will of God in the things of every day.

In the long run the nervous melancholic will only calm the tempest in his mental disposition in true religion, in peace and in repose in God. The more he is filled with the spirit and the love of God, the clearer he sees that man in the work of a divine Master, who wisely dispenses all things, bounties and weaknesses, so that nothing can close us to His Will. "The works of the Lord are great; they are wonderfully ordered in accordance with His will" (Ps. 110:2). His wisdom is especially apparent in the just disposal of talents and weaknesses which carry man to his goal. All our trials and tribulations are only a preparation for a higher spiritual condition, provided we accept them patiently from God's hand. A nervous depression is a real martyrdom which renders the soul struggling against itself receptive of great graces. It leads to a greater holiness, which is often hidden from the suffered himself and those around him. It may only be recognized by the eye of the spirit. Even heathen philosophers recognized the great value of suffering. Cicero says: "It is a great misfortune not to have suffered." How many souls of this sacrificial nature live in religious houses! Their penitential work plays no small part in the mystery of mankind's salvation.

If holiness consisted of being free from faults, nervous people would be completely incapable of it, for they suffer from such weakness of will that they do not always master their spontaneous emotions. It must be a consolation to them that no sin of weakness harms us, provided we make it good with fresh love of God and our neighbor. It only harms those who choose to make friends with it, or who allow themselves to be discouraged on the way to God.

V

Intercourse with Nervous People

Just a few words concerning intercourse with nervous people. Every sick person, every suffering soul deserves the interest and sympathy of others. The person whose suffering is spiritual needs it more than most, for he suffers more than one who is physically ill. But nervous people usually attract only sarcasm, scorn, hardness and contempt. It is true that in the circumstances this is understandable, because people simply do not comprehend the symptoms of this malady. If they gave a little thought to sufferings of nervous people, they would see in them real martyrs and stop torturing them like tyrants. One is deceived by their apparently flourishing appearance, and the sufferer is characterized as a victim of his own imagination with whom one has no need to sympathize. "There are no conceited patients," says Dubris, the famous nerve specialist. "They are all sufferers and are worthy of our sympathy. There are legions of those in whom the most careful examination can find no trace of physical disorder, and for whom one could issue a certificate for life insurance, and who yet endure for months and years, often for life, a veritable martyrdom."

It is true, of course, that anyone regarding his nervous fellow men from a purely natural standpoint would find it very difficult or quite impossible to love many of them. But we can feel sympathy as soon as we properly understand nervous ailments. How many grumblers fail to realize how they repel their fellow men and sow bitterness! How many arrogant people can never be satisfied with the best and most considerate treatment, and demand, like small children, that the world revolve about themselves! One cannot even explain their behavior to them without making them bitter. How much unhealthy jealousy is at the root of the behavior and conversation of nervous people to the detriment of everybody! But they cannot be convinced of it. Others become burdensome owing to the ease with which they are hurt or offended, through their disgust, sulkiness and childish bad behavior. Worst of all, nervous critics alienate the affection of their fellows by their eternal denunciations of others.

Deep melancholics have great need of affection and grow very bitter about everyone, especially superiors, who do not show them the affection and attention they expect. It is often impossible to love nervous people. But justice demands that we should excuse their childish bad behavior as pathological, for many of them suffer greatly from it; it cannot be put down to ill will. This is not to say that we should not draw their attention to it. This, however, must be done in the right spirit, not in a temper, and never as a first violent reaction, or with exaggeration. Sensitive nervous people are already too prone to magnify everything which touches their sense of honor.

We are only in a position to exercise some influence upon difficult cases, when we ourselves are free from bitterness and capable of interesting ourselves in and sympathizing with their mental

sufferings. In our ignorance of nervous cases, kindness is, indeed, often misplaced, but it is not wasted; the hour will come, when kindness can be strict, too, and it will then achieve anything it wills. In general the depressed melancholic can be improved by affection; a single kind word, the tone of the voice, a smile, politeness, readiness to oblige, will serve to raise his spirits and put him in a different mood. Patience, interest, sympathy and well-intended affection comfort the nervous sufferer and strengthen his will to conquer himself.

This well-intended affection is for the sick person the wine and oil which the Good Samaritan poured into the wounds of the poor man he found stripped, robed and wounded. The most difficult job of all is to sympathize with those nervous fellow men who, in their short-sighted passions, do us, or have done us, some injustice or harm. We may take active steps to ward off the harm, and use every means of avoiding censorious people, but we must not let our sympathy turn into hatred or enmity. Anyone who has, as part of his job, to deal with nervous people and who often reaps no reward for all his trouble may content himself with the thought that if his trouble does not benefit the sufferer, it benefits himself.

If the people in closest contact with a nervous person would approach him full of sympathy and interest, with the object of understanding him, they could help him by their good and serious advice. This would be better than making him worse by everlasting reproaches, rendering his life even more painful to him and giving rise to new complexes. How wholesome Confession becomes to a nervous person when he has found an intelligent confessor, who understands him, leads him out of his troubles and shows him the God of love! Mental sufferings are the worst of all. May God grant to all professions, spiritual advisers and teachers, at least light enough to mitigate, soothe and heal these sufferings as far as lies in their power.

VI

Nervous States of a Coercive Nature

It is clear to everyone that states of a coercive character occur in those who are mentally sick; we think, too, of coercive symptoms when people suffer from fear of being touched, when they feel a constant urge to wash themselves, have manias for brooding, doubting and questioning, and do and say the most ridiculous things; but fewer of us are inclined to believe in nervous states of a coercive nature. In the case of nervous people, we go on talking of fancies which they should lay aside, until a doctor comes and diagnoses coercive states: involuntary thoughts, ideas, doubts, scruples, reproaches, ill

humors or depressions. Nervous states of a coercive nature differ from the others in that they can be overcome – by clear and calm self-examination and by the strong will of the nervous subject himself, but usually only by the treatment and medical and spiritual advisers.

1. Characteristics and Origin

Nervous symptoms of a coercive nature are the result of involuntary fear. Fear evokes or accompanies them. Fear is never absent, for it is, in fact, the cause of the coercion. The idea of fear, the coercive thought, can originate in either inner or outer perception, and settles upon the spirit in moments of morbid mental depression. The coercive character can be most easily detected when the coercive content suddenly reveals itself: e.g. inappropriate ideas in the form of blasphemies and impure images occurring in church or when receiving Communion. Coercive states are harder to recognize when they come from within and have the appearance of intelligence and deliberation, or arise from conscientious fears.

Physical disorders accompanying timidity can usually be regarded as sure signs of a coercive nervous condition. This involuntary agitation is transmitted by the sensory nerves to the internal organs and provokes breathing difficulties, digestive disorders, muscular paralysis, feelings of oppression and suffocation, heart and chest pains, alternating pallor and flushing of the face, surges of blood, sensations of heat in the region of the head, a cold sweat in the head with cold shivers in the limbs, a tight feeling in the neck, dryness of the mouth, retching, an urge to let water or evacuate the bowels, which may become uncontrollable, trembling and twitching of the limbs, wobbling of the knees, an inability to speak, to swallow, spasms and serious sexual excitement.

If a penitent comes along who is unable to find words; if the words stick in his throat, or if his legs wobble so that he can scarcely stand or if he becomes breathless, the intelligent confessor will know with what sort of a person he has to deal. If any one of these symptoms is clearly recognizable, he has before him a sufferer from involuntary fear.

Healthy people can also reveal in certain circumstances the same symptoms. Examples are examination fears, or pulpit fear. This fear, however, is distinguishable from that of the nervous sort in being of short duration, and in occurring only on serious occasions. That of nervous people appears without reasonable grounds and paralyzes the sufferer completely and persistently. A peculiarity of nervous involuntary fear is its sudden occurrence; it starts, for instance, when a certain expression is heard, on entering a particular place, on thinking of Hell or the Devil; of a person or an event. It can crop up spontaneously unprovoked. As fear is the kernel of nervousness, nervous temperaments are prone to involuntary fears, though not all to the same extent. Silent, reserved people suffer more than frank and outspoken ones. The still young science of psychoanalysis has attempted to trace involuntary fear and to pursue the sinister dominion of the subconscious to its origin. Emotions of fear and of displeasure, which are uncritically assimilated and thrust into the subconscious, go on living and accumulate as an emotional state, the sinister power of which has a disturbing influence upon the whole mental life. The impulse springs to life as soon as a place, a person, a word or a sound touches upon the fear inspiring experience, and impresses itself as a constraint upon the mind. Even frightening

experiences occurring before birth persist in the subconscious of a person, and retain their power of engendering states of fear.

The author became acquainted with a twenty eight year old person who used to be frightened and upset by rushing water. This effects is said to have been innate. When the person's mother was carrying the child, she was so unhappy in her marriage that she walked along the riverside with the intention of drowning herself in the rushing water. A child of twelve had a painful experience which filled her with shame on the marriage day of her sister. At the festival meal she had the misfortune to drop her plate, containing a piece of cake, and shatter it on the floor. A smacking and a scolding in front of the company spoiled the meal for her. Since that time she has had an unconquerable dislike for cake; the very sight of it upsets her internally. Many folk go to Confession only with the greatest perturbation, or not at all, because the confessional has become for them a fearful experience. They have been unable to rid themselves of it by examining it objectively, so it remains as an involuntary fear. Childhood is an uncritical period in which painful experiences make a deep impression upon the minds of nervous people. How many are the causes of disagreeable experiences for tender minds! Exaggerated demands, excessive strictness, frightenings and threats during their upbringing, unnatural exaggerations of God's punishments by teachers and preachers – all become terrifying experiences for children, and have lasting after effects. The melancholic person's exaggerated ideals of virtue together with his ready shame make him an easy prey to painful experiences. Temptations, childish sins, petty lies and such things often become fearful experiences for the tender mind of a child.

At times when the body and mind are tired, a person is more vulnerable and less critical in the presence of disagreeable experiences, and coercive states arise more easily. The years of puberty, the menstruation period in women illnesses, serious mental disappointments and shocks, deep passions, are other examples of such times. A coercive condition often arises on the loss of a loved person, of money and property, as a result of serious humiliations, through quarrels, enmity, hatred, envy, deep jealousy, covetousness and the collapse of ideals. It may occur as a result of a frightened inhibition of temptations, through sins of which one is ashamed, in doubt, and as a result of scruples. Passions driven into the subconscious by fear often have reactions in quite another direction. Children that are too strictly brought up often rebel later on against all authority. The impulse which is suppressed is often replaced by a compensating impulse of another kind.

2 The Coercion

The involuntary fear of the subconscious is an uncanny power which foists ideas upon the individual, monopolizes his thoughts, judgements and desires, takes complete hold of his mind, and swallows whole anything that is left. It has so strong an effect upon the mind that all the powers of the soul are diverted to the object of the impulse. It confuses and obstructs quiet thought and judgement, and so seriously cripples the will that the person can neither see nor judge clearly, and loses all self-control. If the notion of fear is clear and regarded as a reasonable judgement, because its morbid character is not recognized, the thought and action which ensue is blindly impulsive. The nervous subject often knows that what he does may not be right, but the excitement of fear paralyzes his will to resist. If an action of this kind amounts to a sin, the nervous person knows exactly what he is doing, but,

lacking resolution, he gives in and obeys his impulse. Fear robs the will of its energy, steadfastly forcing its desires. The impulsive idea is dominant so that the subject's intelligence no longer considers the motives of his behavior or resistance. Coercive states of a nervous kind can be overcome, but usually only in special circumstances and with special help. A completely moral appraisal of involuntary behavior is, therefore, not available. Coercive states always occur together with a profound ill humor, a deep depression. In states of pathological fatigue the nervous person is no longer master of his imagination. Out of the low spirits which ensue develops a pessimistic tendency to see only the gloomy aspect of things, to denounce and to criticize, as though all light had disappeared and shade alone remained. Irritability, fear of the ego, distrust and envy grow apace.

If the nervous subject abandons himself to his imaginings and his ill humor, or if he regards these imaginings as the normal judgment of his intelligence, he begins to think along compulsory lines. He acquires doubts as to the sincerity and honesty of his own people. He guesses their false intentions in their looks and tone. The melancholic man gives way to the crazy imaginings of his temperament and believes himself persecuted. The choleric man becomes even more unbearable in his distortions and reproaches of the worst sort. The effect on the sanguine man is less harmful, because his imaginary fear turns more upon his health and property. In accordance with their religious disposition, many are impelled to seek the confessional. Melancholics and choleric not infrequently come out of spite, insubordination, or with the object of calumniating or persecuting others.

At times of severe mental depression, the nervous person has not the power to combat constantly recurring imaginary images and notions of fear or to replace them with others. Involuntary imaginings of all sorts ensue – of diseases, of guilt, of God's punishment, etc. With some, the hearing of sermons offers an occasion for developing involuntary ideas; they think they have committed every sin that is mentioned. Others read the news items in the papers and associate with them the most impossible thoughts. All the troubles of life serve to occasion these forced imaginings. The ordinary sentiment of doubt is distinguished from coercive doubt by the obstinacy with which the latter recurs and is held, and by the profound fear with which it is accompanied. While the former disappears when its cause is explained, the fear-charged doubt persistently recurs and leads to involuntary brooding, or scrupulousness, when a guilty conscience is involved. The sufferer expects the brooding to clear up his doubts but, in reality the agitation of fear increases, confuses his reason still more, and fatigues the mind all to no effects. Coercive doubt can never be cleared away by brooding, because it excites and stirs up the imagination so that this persistently gives a false picture of the situation from which the doubt emanates. This type of doubt can only be eliminated by the judgment of another, a person with authority. The judgment of a confessor, whom the nervous person must trust and obey implicitly, alone gives certainty. He must employ his whole energy in obedience to his confessor if he wants to escape from his doubt.

Nervous melancholics are specially prone to nervous reproaches of an involuntary kind. Many blame themselves for a lack of feeling in performing their moral religious duties, putting it down to lukewarmness, lack of will power or obduracy. For example, a person in a state of mental depression can scarcely pray. Feelings of devotion, penitence, charity and confidence in God are lacking. Aversion and disbelief tend to grow instead. If he wants to love his parents, the opposite emotion crops up

immediately. The oppressed sufferer discovers serious reasons for reproaching himself. Even on his good days the melancholic person is inclined to condemn his best actions and to check his spiritual progress by his despondency. His reproofs of real faults, bound up as they are with an agitating fear, are excessive, highly exciting and so disturbing that he thinks that they are unforgivable. He sees God's judgment in harmless things, and regards his every failure as punishment for his faults. Involuntary reproaches bring on involuntary doubt and involuntary brooding. The result of this is that the examination of conscience becomes a torture and is never complete.

Involuntary actions occur among normal people in moments of great excitement, e.g., when in a violent temper. They occur much more readily among nervous subjects, especially when they spring from excessive fear. It is not difficult to recognize this kind, but more careful research is required to confirm those involuntary nervous actions which result from obscure conditions. It is only as the logical consequence of these conditions that they can be understood. Inhibitions, too, belong to this group. They make the nervous subject incapable, e.g., of walking, of standing, of writing or of speaking. Some are incapable of pronouncing certain words – the words of consecration or absolution, or passages from the Missal or the Breviary. In others all speech becomes impossible; the tongue is tied in the presence of important personalities, at important moments at the doctor's, in the confessional, at an examination.

Sins and crimes can also originate in obscure coercive states – sins against one's own life and the lives of others, against property, sins against charity, insubordination and stubbornness. We are often concerned with compensatory impulses. Children who are too strictly disciplined often incline in later life to resent all authority. They are impelled so to act by the experiences of dislike stored in their subconscious. These coercive sins result from emotional impulses of varying degrees of strength, and may be overcome by people who are otherwise morally strong, provided they make great efforts of will, and especially if their sense of honor is alive.

The forced behavior most difficult to detect is that associated with sex. Since the sexual nervous system, together with its muscles, possesses considerable independence and is not always subject to the will, the inward sins of weakness which occur periodically are seldom overcome. A distinction must here be drawn between actions which take place in the presence of others, when the feelings of honor and shame come to one's aid, and actions towards oneself which are secret. These latter should always be judged in the mildest manner in the case of nervous persons who are otherwise virtuous and who are suffering from an involuntary depression.

3 The Cure

The cure of these coerced sufferings is both difficult and very lengthy. It is not within everyone's power to be of help, but all the trouble is lightened by the thought of bringing relief to the most unfortunate of all people. All those, at least, whose profession it is to have care of souls, should be aware of these coercive conditions, and consider how to combat this unreasonable fear, lest they aggravate the sufferings by a false treatment. In treating such sufferers a favorable opportunity must be looked for or provided when the sufferer is in a state of repose. All nervous agitations are periodic; they

have an ebb and flow. When excited, the nervous person is incapable of either thinking or taking advice. Hence consultations must be arranged when the sufferer is quiet, so that his mind may be capable of thought and his will master of his actions. The place, the manner and the tone of the consultation should all be treated individually with appropriate exercises, or, if nowhere else is available, only outside the normal times of hearing confessions.

The first task is the enlightenment of the mind. One often gains the necessary confidence of the patient by listening to him quietly until he provides a suitable opportunity for one's intervention. Once contact has been made, one can sympathetically enlighten him as to his condition. The patient is usually convinced he cannot help himself and needs a friend. If one succeeds in showing him the way to a cure, and in convincing him that by following it he will soon be freed from his tyrannical condition, the lost belief in his better self revives and, along with it, his courage and force of will. He breathes more freely when he finds he is understood, and begins to see that his case is not so bad, that a cure is possible and even easy. Once the patient recognizes the enemy is fear-inspired compulsion, one must direct his weak will against fear-charged ideas and strengthen it with clear, precise instructions which can be easily remembered when fresh waves of agitation threaten to shake his confidence in one's advice. With this baseless fear it is always necessary to enlighten the patient in detail as to the causes, experiences and things which have given rise to his fear. "The truth will make you free." This lengthy, very difficult process of enlightenment must often reach back far into the past, correct many false judgments and make clear the filly and injuriousness of the fear.

The next thing is to raise the will so that it ignores all terrors and misgivings, distracts the mind from the object inspiring the fear with the utmost exertion, and directs it upon ideas which soothe and heal. The more radically one turns away from fear, ignores it and attacks it, the more quickly it passes. It is here that the difficulty of cure lies, because the nervous person, with his innate vulnerability, constantly gives way to it. In his despondency, and irresolution he takes no stand and goes on brooding. However intelligent and mentally cultivated he is in most things, he finds it terribly difficult to oppose any resistance to this depressing agitation of fear and despondency.

People who are subject to coercive doubt and addicted to scruples can only be freed from their coercive fear by blind obedience to the orders of their confessor, who binds them to a form of confession. "In my opinion the only remedy for scrupulousness, even of the most advanced form, consists in training the sufferers to make confessions completely free from anxiety." (Bergmann) Since these sufferers are incapable of clearly judging things which lie under the shadow of their fear, they are not in duty bound to make detailed confessions; morals only require a formal one in their case. Their fear is usually concerned with the sixth commandment. Hence all induced doubts and reproaches should be excluded from the confession; the sins against the sixth commandment should be admitted quite generally. The patient should eliminate all his religious doubts and especially all his involuntary reactions of hatred of God and blasphemies, whether they occur inside or outside church. He should leave out all self-reproach about bad communions, imperfect preparations for Communion and Confession, his lack of sorrow for sin and purpose of amendment, his distractions at Mass, his aversions for religion, prayer, parents and teachers. Self-accusations of oath swearing, involuntary swearing, annoyance to others, and every triviality which is touched by the induced anxiety, should be ruled out.

Each of these forcible sufferers has his own criterion. What really is sin must be summarized briefly, so that everything that commonly occurs is included. The scrupulous person is not to be permitted to alter anything in the form. Every confessor to whom the scrupulous person goes should revert to it; instead of putting further anxious questions to him and confusing him afresh, the adviser should require him to obey strictly the formula given.

Persons suffering from these mental inhibitions must take by the horns their chief enemy – their timid disposition with its incorrigible despondency, for it deprives them of all resilience, all confidence in God and is therefore a sin against hope – as their pet failing. Their chief spiritual task is to recognize, at the base of their easily-wounded ego, this enemy, which gives them their peculiarity. They must learn to fight it by a daily exercise of the will, and to wean themselves thoroughly from it. They should daily test themselves, examining their consciences to discover to what extent they have yielded to despondency and brooded. The oppressed in mind should never weary of this fight against false humility. A disordered self-love causes us to see only the good side of our temperament and blinds us to its weaknesses, especially the deep seated, most secret impulses of self-preservation, which shake the mind with unnecessary fears. That which cannot be removed, must be accepted and borne as a wholesome cross given us by God. In time it will then heal the source of our distress, namely, wounded self-love, help us to rid ourselves of sensitivity and prepare a proper place for God in our hearts.

For a lasting cure the nervous subject needs joy and courage. He will find these, not in an ideal life which floats in the clouds, but in one which is fitted to his disposition and powers. United with the religious ideal, this will become an ambition which no one can prevent him from attaining. The ambition, deepened by grace and purified by experience, should embrace his whole character, raise it, and render it happy, and be so implanted in his profession that it permeates and transfigures all his actions and makes them a source of joy. In this connection it depends less on this or that profession than on the manner in which he regards his own, carries out his duties religiously, turns to God, trains himself for joy and accustoms himself to see the lighter side of life rather than its shades.

A man's belief in himself, in his better self and his achievements increases with the realization that he does his duty, provided he has the right attitude to life. Belief in his own future brightens a man's views and helps him to ignore his whims. The nervous person has a special need of a clear religious purpose. Jesus' words apply specially to him: "Martha, Martha, how many cares and troubles thou hast! But only one thing is necessary."

This one necessary thing is love. "Love drives away fear," says St. John. On his journey to God the nervous person suffers most from paralysis. He sees the many demands made on him by God, life and other people: they all seem superhuman, inaccessible as far as he is concerned because he sees himself so weak and so full of faults. He has to be shown the peaceful pole round which everything, however complicated it looks, revolves, the kernel, the simple, the essential thing – love, which is the fulfilling of the whole of the law. Love, which the Holy Ghost pours into the soul, links man to God, so that he lives in and for Him. It directs his works towards God, regulates and powerfully trains his mind with its impulses. Where love is master, darkness recedes; fear with its infuriating burdens retreats into the background. When love enters the soul, it is accompanied like a queen by a whole court of divine

and moral virtues. Love brings unity into the variety of religious life. The Holy Ghost leads the nervous person to a beneficent simplicity which strengthens and brings joy to the soul.

The love of God makes prayer easy. It becomes a childlike communion of the soul with the beloved. For all people this is the most powerful and fruitful sort of prayer. As a child goes to an affectionate mother, the loving child of God goes in confidence to God, Who surrounds him with paternal love and care. He feels comfortable and safe in His presence, continually walks with him and seeks to do His will in all things. "Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven." To love God in a childlike manner is the secret of blessedness in Him. Love has the effect of making a man forget himself. To the nervous, this appears a most difficult task. Love for God and one's neighbor does not think anxiously of itself; it is concerned with God and the neighbor, escapes itself, works and sacrifices for others. "Charity seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, is not envious; charity is patient, kind and not puffed up." "Follow after charity!" If we ask the apostle for the heart of virtue, it is the charity which orders all things, and without which there is not order. The power of charity makes everyone, even the weakest or nervous people, strong and simple in character; it creates the simplicity of the child of God. "Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." To follow after charity, says the apostle, is the follow a more excellent path – to fulfil the whole law. Charity, however, is not the fruit of the human spirit. It is that inpouring, that breath of God's Spirit, with which Jesus breathes upon all and draws to Himself all those who come to Him, walk in His company, and live in and for Him.

VII

Enter the Realm of Peace

The hypersensitive person gains self-knowledge by meditation in peace of mind. This knowledge clears the way for the will to strengthen its tottering kingdom. The will must grasp again the ruler's scepter and establish and maintain peace and quiet in the state within. It must re-establish the intelligence upon the seat of judgment, and hold in check the disturbers of the peace, the servants – the emotions. They must no longer be allowed to tyrannize the mind in the form of ill-humors. The spirit must rule by turning its attention upon higher things, until the heart reposes in God for which it was created. The principle weapon in this battle is equanimity.

Equanimity in the holy will of God makes one indifferent of the fascination of earthly goods and brings repose of soul, the true freedom of the children of God, that talisman of an untroubled and steady serenity of mind, which sweeps away ill-humor and enables one to savor the peace of God. "Equanimity with a relaxing influence upon the blood pressure is the best insurance against abnormal expenditure of energy. It is the optimum recipe for the perfect functioning of the nerve centres in the brain, the blood

vessels, the trophic nerves and the internal organs.” (med. Erhard.) It is the best remedy for nervous irritability of the emotions.

1 Recognize the Source of all Disquiet in Yourself

The first requirement for self-training is knowledge of oneself, the source of all disorder and disquiet. The best remedy can then be applied. All the disquiet and fear of the nervous person derives from the impulse mechanism of the subconscious, and can be termed *morbid self-love*.

Morbid self-love can be divided into four varieties in accordance with the four great fields in which men find their life’s joy. They are: the life of the body, with its impulses towards sensual enjoyment; the life of society, with its impulses of attraction and revulsion and of sensual love; the life of personal existence with its ambitions, its self-assertiveness; the life of religion with its religious emotions. To this fourfold ego correspond four groups of secret, subconscious impulses which have received from the wise Creator the task of striving to obtain the things necessary for life, and protecting them against enemies. Self-love has been inordinate and morbidly sensitive since the Fall.

(a) God has provided man with a number of strong, emotions in order to preserve the vegetative, the physical life. Without its feelings of hunger and thirst man probably would not feed himself adequately. His need of sleep, joy in work and a feeling of well-being are his leaders in the instinctive maintenance of life. If the physical self is in danger, fear urges self defense. This self-love is a healthy and necessary impulse which is served by a number of feelings. If, however, a person is nervous, uncontrolled irritability, sensitivity and anxiety manifest themselves in this complex of feelings. Wrong judgments and morbid self-love are the results. The man’s disposition receives the stamp of unconscious fear for his health. The beginnings of this morbid self-love are already apparent in early childhood. It becomes the worst possible counselor. It prevents the person from expressing himself properly and leads him to do silly things. It creates the nervous type who is for ever preoccupied with this health – the hypochondriac.

If anyone speaks of an ailment, the hypochondriac has always got it, too. Who has not met people, who have but one subject of conversation – their health, illnesses and pains. One such can only see a window open to have a cold. Another cannot bear to have a window closed. Doctors are very familiar with this morbid self-love, and patient confessors even more so. The more time these people have to think about themselves the worse they are. They are a burden to themselves and others. Satisfied with nothing, they always think they will be better elsewhere. They repay kind services and nursing with complaining and bitterness. Their food is at one time too greasy, at another too dry; now too hot and now too cold. At one moment they are suffering from loss of appetite, at another from ravenous hunger. Some desire to appear ill and take steps to make themselves so. They are incalculable. At one moment they are at the point of death and ask for a priest; the next, they will go out and eat as though in the best of health. They do not like serious work. It is too heavy, too light or too monotonous. They never cease complaining. They always think they would be better off in another job, in another place. Their self-love is morbid because under the stress of nervous fear, the feelings which minister to their physical well-being obtrude exaggerated, distorted ideas.

The sanguine man, whose ideals are as shallow as his emotions, tends to enjoyment, comfort, ease and pleasure. He wants to see and hear new things. He is curious and fond of gossip. He is never at ease. He speaks much of good food and drink, loves luxury and a thousand glittering trifles. If he is nervous, he is restlessness and dissatisfaction personified. He is never happy and content.

If he would only fill his heart with the higher joys that one finds in God, he would soon taste true peace and have the strength which conquers. What he lacks is the necessary self-control, toughness and resignation to the will of God. His perpetual restlessness prevents him from making any progress in the spiritual life. St. Theresa admits of herself that she was for a time exceedingly anxious about her weak health; but when she submitted all to God, and toughened herself in a spirit of sacrifice, she was better both physically and mentally.

(b) God has given man a number of strong feelings for the maintenance of his species. One speaks of the gregarious instinct. Attraction and repulsion are among the strongest power factors. A mother would not make heroic sacrifices for her child if she were not impelled by a strong inclination. Without corresponding feelings, children would not make sacrifices for their parents, nor would married people bear the burden of raising a family. States, communities, families and friendships are maintained by this same gregarious instinct. God has brought men together and furnished them with sensual and mental attractions and aversions. Sensual attraction is strengthened even more at the time of adolescence by the developing sexual instinct. All these social feelings work together and are linked with significant forces which, where the nervous disposition is sound, afford man the best basis for a happy social life. If these instincts are ordered and controlled by reason and Christian charity, man's self-love is quite healthy.

But if a man is nervous, the morbid, irritable ego is abnormally sensitive in its attractions and aversions. The man reveals a morbid self-love which is a source of perpetual and painful uneasiness. No other tendency makes a man more peculiar and more blind in his judgment than this over readiness to like or dislike people, which often results in his approving or condemning someone at the first glance. With what jealousy do nervous people seek the welfare of the one they love, or the favor and affection of others! How distrustfully they behave, and how easily they incline to slander, quarrels and eternal enmity! How easily they are led even to murder and homicide! If one looks at these sensitive creatures, they think one has something against them; if one does not look at them, they are seriously offended. The fear they have of losing the favor of others, of making a bad impression, has so great a hold upon them that they see almost everything in a perverse light.

With many nervous people the exaggerated sex instinct becomes a source of painful uneasiness and torturing anxiety; for it agitates the mind and, to some extent, withdraws muscular and nervous impulses from the control of the will. Nervous fear of sin often prevents the best of such people from quieting this instinct because fear concentrates the attention upon every shade of feeling, when the only way of fighting it consists in getting away from it – in distraction.

The hysterical person is a type of this morbid ego. He knows no middle way between enthusiastic affection and devilish hatred. He acts in obedience to humor, mood and egotism, and does

not stick to the truth. No one is so hindered by fear for his precious ego than he, with his perpetual struggle against everything which touches him too closely. This morbid fear perverts every honorable trait and spiritual capacity. The better self never emerges. Fear of loss can turn the ardent affections of a hysterical person into mortal hatred in a moment. It often turns up as a neurosis or coercive condition. Who can live at peace with such people? Who can satisfy them, since they can never be convinced of their illness, of their personal responsibility for all their troubles?

Depending upon the temperamental disposition, the fear of hysteria may arise in different emotional spheres. In those of choleric-sanguine it manifests itself in intolerable jealousy or petty sensitivity. In melancholic types it is turned inwards making them brood agonizingly over impulsive utterances which in turn bring about sexual excesses and uncharitableness. Hysteria is another notion. Its manifestations differ considerably with the mental disposition. Hysterical people have one thing in common with all nervous people: they never admit that they are abnormal or ill. They will not grant that their fear for their ego makes them unfit for life and must bear the blame for all their mistakes and failures, for all their false judgements and misunderstandings. The jealousy of a choleric person who is nervously disposed is boundless. He thinks he was born to rule over all, and intends to dispose of everything that stands in his way with aversion and slander. He fights his imagined enemies with the utmost bitterness.

When a person pretends in order to attract attention to himself, he is said to suffer from hysteria. Such a person has spasms and faints, is ill or without feeling, so that others will concern themselves about him. Abnormal sensual affections and aversions, especially in relation to the opposite sex, are characteristic of hysteria. Love, hatred and slander may be seen in such a person in the self-same hour. Lying unconsciously and probably in self defense is not unusual. Delusions in the form of visions, especially of a religious kind, are symptomatic of hysteria, because they make the visionary the center of attention. Hysterical people have the doctor and priest fetched at night, and are at work the next day.

This fear for the ego, whether it be externalized or turned inwards, is the source of all restlessness and is the commonest obstacle which stands between the soul and God. The nervous person finds complete resignation to God extremely difficult. He fights shy of committing himself to the uncertain future, which this resignation implies. In vain he tries to find peace in the fulfillment of his desires, in fearfully avoiding all that is painful. In this he feels miserable, and yet he will not break away from it, because he will not commit himself to God, to complete renunciation. But there is no other way to attain to inward peace than by yielding, for good and all, to God's will. Only thus can one perceive how wise God is in His leading. For those that love God all turns out for the best – affection, aversion, favor and disfavor, friend and foe; they need fear nothing at all.

(c) A third group of deep emotions implanted by God in human nature with the object of maintaining and completing the individual, and ensuring his success in life, is the more spiritual one. The chief of these feelings is the sense of honor. Beside it there stands a mighty group of defensive feelings which oppose everything that hinders the individual. Depending upon his education and disposition, this complex of feelings is directed upon material or spiritual goods. If the sense of honor is

one-sidedly developed the individual is completely set on one of these directions. If, e.g., his respect is for the possession of money, this trait gradually swallows up the other better and nobler feelings; it makes the miser starve himself beside his money.

If the sense of honor is nervously sensitive, morbid fear for the precious self becomes a devastating power in the mind, a source of eternal disquiet, which gives its stamp to everything the man does. The morbid sense of honor exaggerates the importance of the individual, his powers, disposition and achievements. The man sees himself other than he is; he plays an affected role and his greatest fear is that someone might unmask him. In other cases, an army of defensive feelings are set in motion: profound dislike, hatred, envy, jealousy. Life's way is obstructed by fear of men's judgment. Fear of disgrace, fear of the truth, cause the nervous person to lead a life of pretence. His is a servile nature; he will not rid himself of the chains of human fear and human respect. He is pleased with everything which flatters his role of pretence. Even in childhood, the lie is the means he employs to escape from giving himself away. Involved, insincere behavior inhibits any noble feelings he has. The schoolboy lies to himself in his nervous overestimation of his qualities. His work is superficial because he is overhasty in saying: "I know my subject." It is often difficult to convince nervously eccentric people about their real achievements. Life built upon deceit and delusion must inevitably fail at some time, and the nervous person is frequently shattered by a serious shock.

Wary of life, many a one then commits suicide. Nervous, hasty people are always quailing under the awful fear of rebuffs and disgrace.

The type of this morbid ego is the neurasthenic. The nervous impulse of self-assertion urges people to do their best and noblest. The whole organism is possessed with the impulse, and this act is manifested in zeal for work, inward uneasiness and haste. The neurasthenic works day and night and cannot endure the idea of anyone's being above him. If anyone strives to compete with him he is consumed with envy and ill will. He becomes obstinate when his person or his work is criticized. This obstinacy can have quite bad effects, so that the man does the very opposite of what authority demands, and he commits crimes from very spite. "You want me to do something? I'll show you who's master here! I'll do something really bad now, just to annoy you."

The melancholic is driven by his anxiety for his ego and its honor to intensifying his safety measures, to taking greater precautions, to anxious distrust, to living in the future, to having forebodings. As the possibility of succumbing is constantly feared, his weighing and testing of all the difficulties becomes his passion, so that these difficulties are overestimated. If the choleric man does not immediately reach his goal, he begins to flatter – superior especially – twists the facts, and slanders others, in the hope of making them look small and increasing his own value.

Self-respect is the strongest of all the feelings, the queen in the mind, to which all other impulses are obedient. All men have an innate fear for the safety of their persons; without this, education would be impossible, but if this fear is associated with nervousness it dominates every aspect of the person's self-expression. The number of nervous people is legion, but few of them are sufficiently honest to admit that fear makes them so sharp or so miserable, spoils their best achievements and

obstructs, through jealousy, much that is good. A person is even more reluctant to make this admission when it concerns the highest goods – God and virtue. Many think that their nervous delicacy of conscience and their morbid scrupulousness is genuine piety. They persist in this until their health is ruined or their condition becomes unbearable. Once a person realizes how harmful this nervous anxiety for one's ego is, how much conceit, superficiality, untruthfulness, one sidedness and self-deception it brings, how blind and dumb it makes him to Christ's peace, to repose in God, to genuine goodness, grace and true happiness, he will not look for his real enemy among others. He will see that it is fear, and will declare unremitting war upon it.

But nervous people seldom achieve this self-knowledge; they do not learn that fear is their false leader and adviser, the tyrant of their actions. Who then will dare to strip the mask from these hypersensitive people and tell them the truth about their abnormality? Who will succeed in teaching these unapproachable folk who regard anyone that contradicts them as their bitterest enemy? They first have to play out their conceited role in life, and be shattered by their failure. But then knowledge often comes too late. The weariness of life that the discovery brings drags them to the depths; some cowardly, mad idea frets their nerves.

(d) The fourth group of emotions found in man, is that which maintains the soul in its relationship to God, and sharpens the conscience. These feelings are those of the natural fear of God and of love of moral ideals. If deeply religious people are nervous, the fear reigning in their subconscious minds, affects their piety and their conscience. Emotional ideas tinged with fear cloud and confuse the reason and the judgment, magnify and distort the faults. Every infringement of their ideals makes a deep impression and becomes a sin. The fear of not being in a state of grace, urges them to repeat themselves in Confession. Self-torturing searches for sins that do not exist and scruples about harmless trifles discourage the soul. These anxious fears have the appearance of being justified and so are the more deceptive. If there is a tendency for coercive fear, fixed ideas find a lodgment and completely ruin the nerves. The effect is nearly always a weariness of life. This fear about purity from sin is one of the deepest sources of spiritual disquiet and the greatest hindrance to achieving peace in God. It robs the sufferer of all confidence in God and is only with great difficulty recognized as a malady.

A nervous person is characterized by anxious and excessive uneasiness. His need to feel secure, his relationship to his fellow men, his personal success, his religious relationship with God – these form for every man a fourfold source of uneasiness. Apprehension lies hidden in the subconscious of everyone, and is one of the chief factors promoting his physical, social, personal and spiritual wellbeing. Even normal people are often anxious about their health, those they love, and getting on in life, about freedom from sin and their struggle towards perfection. How much more so are nervous people! Unfortunately there are few who look for the source of all disquiet in themselves, and still fewer who set all their hopes upon God, in order to find repose in Him.

How urgently does our Savior bid us to cast all our cares upon His loving Father, Who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies of the field and Who cares yet more for His children! These resign themselves to His will, to His providence, and have but one wish – to be obedient to Him in all things! What good does it do to be oversolicitous? With all our anxiety about our height, can we add one cubit to it? The

man, who seeks to do and find God's will in all things, will recover a hundredfold, even in this world, all that he appears to be giving up: Heaven in his heart, peace in God and eternal life. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and everything else will be granted you"

2 Renounce and Endure

The precious ego, the sick ego, the wounded ego, believes itself capable of creating a heaven by emancipating its impulses from all control. The ego of impulse means to be its own God, in accordance with the Devil's prescription: "You will be like gods" (Gen. 3:5). What happens is that it bursts into the kingdom of disquiet; it finds darkness and discontent. What there is of divine in it diminishes and the satanic domes to the fore. It obeys the law of darkness which conflicts with God's law, saying "I shall please myself. My own will and my own fancy shall be commandment and order enough for me."

All human impulses have their task and importance. It is foolish to disown them. They make their presence felt in all the functions of the spiritual and physical organism and we become conscious of them through the nerves without guilt or sin. The child of God must deny himself inordinate, excessive and unhealthy emotion – everything, in a word, that is contrary to God's will or contrary to charity. The spirit of God which Christians obey is that of discipline. Its law is as follows: "Renounce and endure in order to yield to the will of God." Deny yourself and the false law in your members, and let the Holy Ghost lead you. If you wish to be a free man, a man of divine nobility and godlike character, a true ruler, you must renounce and endure. The law which says "yes" to life, in accordance with which the self-denial of the Gospel must be ordered, is the law of love. Love speaks from the Gospel pages and in all circumstances prays; "Father, not my will but thine be done!"

The person who means to order and master his inner life, who wishes to enter the kingdom of peace, must consider detail and begin by restoring order to his world of ideas. The first requirement of Christ, the supreme Teacher, is: Think along new lines – *metanoeite*. One's thinking must be turned upon God. The child of this world, with his earthly mentality must become a child of God with a new outlook, a redisposition of his thoughts. A change of mind, *metanoeia*, has been the demand of preachers and prophets at all times. A difficult piece of detailed work! But the reward is peace in God, the kingdom of God.

The nervous person in particular must not permit himself any freedom of thought or rather mental anarchy. If he does, he is the plaything of his impulses, his fancies and darkness. He must order his mind, and must dominate and direct his impulses with a supply of good thoughts. Easily excited people must be told again and again that they have a mighty power in their thoughts, which can be used in the difficult task of controlling themselves. "Sow a thought, and you reap desire; sow a desire and you reap a deed; sow a deed and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow the character and it grows into your destiny!" Only the man who has power over himself is truly a king ruling in his broad world of ideas. "The springs of words and deeds flow from the secret depths of the world of thought. The man who is master of these springs is the master of the city." With the right thoughts we awaken and guide our impulses. Without doubt we depend upon external things, but our character is formed from within.

Anyone who has noble thoughts, deep convictions and high principles, which he retains even when it costs him some sacrifice, is a man of character. It is a law of the mind that what a man thinks, he is or soon will be. The man who constantly thinks good thoughts becomes good or is so already. He who has bad thoughts and only sees the dark side, soon becomes gloomy and bad. The man whose mind constantly revolves upon worldly things becomes worldly, restless and egotistical. But he who concerns himself with God becomes saintly. God meets the soul in thoughts; the union is consummated of nature and grace, of human and divine power, of God's spirit and the human spirit. It is love which brings lightness, the habitual quality of the thoughts. One gladly thinks of the things to which the heart is drawn. For this reason God puts the command to love at the summit. Anyone who fulfils this law keeps all the other commandments. He has command of his thoughts and of all his impulses.

The nervous sufferer must be completely convinced that he will find again his joy in life, strength to renounce and endure, in trusting and loving communion with the ever present God. He must be sure that this will deliver him from his fears about his worldly condition and restore his peace of mind. The time he spends with his God in his heart will become a pleasure, a need, a continuous prayer. He will become as a child in the arms of God. He will be as one reborn, with new nervous power. At first this loving meditation upon God will be hard. It requires persistence and a new start every day. But one must not be discouraged by the slow progress one makes on the way to God. God's will be done! That is the watchword in this case, too. Perseverance leads to the goal. One should make a daily habit of reading books which stimulate converse with God. One should daily investigate the obstacles to this and practice continually the turning of the thoughts upon Him Who always looks lovingly upon us.

The second exercise consists in switching the thoughts from darkness to light, from the defective to the perfect. To see that everybody and everything has a good side, to overlook the faults of others – this brings peace, joy, and the strength to become good. Nervousness is basically fear and weakness, the opposite of love, benevolence, riches, strength and light. Emotions of fear obstruct the good. Terrifying fears must be overcome by thoughts of love and benevolence.

Self-love swallows up your soul's strength. You think you could lose yourself if you forgot yourself. It is blindness. He who loses himself will gain himself. What does it matter that if others speak slightly of you or are set above you? Overcome yourself! Think of your sins before God, or your debt to Him. Regard yourself as a sinner, but as one who can pay his debt by new love of God and your fellow-men. Rejoice, then, that you possess an easy means of making amends to God in having kind thoughts for your neighbor. "You have done it to me". Do not be a beetle investigating the dunghill, but a bee flying from blossom to blossom, keen only to find honey. Look, like the bee, only for the good and forget or ignore the failings. The kindly thought brings forth the appreciation, the kindly word, and the good deed. Both make you happy and courageous and drive away all ill humor and depression.

Just try it; whenever you feel in a bad humor make an effort to say a kindly, appreciative word to your fellow man, and your bad humor will vanish; the response of your fellow man is a joyful reciprocal love and this reacts upon your mind. Goodness is strength and riches; fear and ill-humor are

weaknesses; goodness dissipates and overcomes them. It delivers the nervous man from his sufferings and impulses without his having to change his profession. All he has to do is to alter his mental outlook – to renounce his self-love. The behavior of nervous people in the presence of strangers is often quite different from that behavior among relatives and familiars. It is here that a beginning should be made with kind thoughts, a cheerful aspect, good natured words and behavior. Self-conquest practiced in the smallest things of everyday is excellent, if also very difficult. How often are you out of humor during the day, irritable, sharp? “You did it to me”. Seek His presence. In Him you can do all things.

Besides kindly thoughts, the most necessary but at the same time the most difficult exercise is that of withholding judgment upon one’s neighbor. What makes the nervous man so sharp in his judgments. Why does he find it almost impossible to renounce this habit, even though he knows that it provokes God’s anger. “Do not judge others, or you yourself will be judged.” Is it anxiety concerning his ego that he means to increase by emphasizing others’ failings?

Is it the anarchy, the presumption and arrogance of the judge which develops in him the trait of seeing the faults of others and overlooking any good in them? But how blind and conceited is the person who presumes to sit in God’s seat of judgment! For God alone knows the minds and hearts of His poor creatures and suffers mercifully their shortcomings. Pious people in particular are prone to harsh judgments.

Those whose business it is to watch over and lead others are very sharp critics. The sense of responsibility, the fear that their own value is diminished by the faults of those over whom they are set, makes them harsh. They look only at the shadows and these shadows cause them trepidation. They no longer see the darkness in which they themselves live. Even their lack of success does not teach them a better way; they just grow more irritable. The person who is for ever criticizing and condemning is no leader either in politics or religion. He does no good either in the community or in the family. To give up judging is difficult because it requires that a man renounce himself. Fear of loss of face makes him blind to the harmfulness of this habit. The nervous person finds it extremely difficult to switch his thoughts and judgments to charitableness and pity, with the object of opening his eyes to goodness. Nothing is more necessary than this renunciation, because, without it, the soul sticks at the externals of religion and fails to understand either God or itself. God makes our patience with our fellow-men a condition of His love and mercy towards us. To break oneself of the habit of judging, one must engage daily in communion with God, thinking good thoughts and training oneself in kindness. God’s judgment of us depends upon this. Hence there is no time to lose. We must begin this exercise of renunciation without delay, and institute a daily examination into our progress.

A fourth exercise is the renunciation of the will. Coincidence of our will with the will of God is the law of love and peace. Fear for the things of the world stimulates the nervous man to work and this stimulation renders him blind and loveless. Intellectual workers, people of a silent nature, are often obsessed by their work, by a frenzy to work. They are so anxious to do everything well or to complete what they are doing. In this excessive zeal for getting things done, for possession, achievement and success, they give themselves no rest; they have no time for God, for their neighbor; they have worried,

sullen faces; they get irritable when anything upsets them or when anyone obstructs them. Work and worry about their worldly affairs have become their passion.

They have disordered their lives so that their nervous energy is consumed. Often enough this leads to physical and mental collapse. These stormy characters hold out for a long time, but, in time, their growing irritability, the upsetting of their general health, their need for solitude and their nervous tendency to hasty judgments indicate that their strength is petering out.

These people say: "I'm like that. It is my temperament." This is not so. Their temperament is simply undisciplined. Discipline, renunciation and endurance are necessary. Order and coincidence with the will of God must help to overcome his petty fear. "In tranquility and order I do it as well as I can, and I do not mind blame, provided I am doing my duty and God's will." "I will moderate my demands and forego the best, lest I forget my most important task – to become a good man." Order and quiet leads to good solid work. Away with fear of what others will say! Away with brooding and worry about the future! "I will draw up my plan of work and my timetable, and before every task I will stand silent before God and say: 'O God, I seek nothing but Thy will in this task. I am content with all that men say; I seek only Thee.'" How beneficent, then, is the effect of this peace in God's will upon the soul and upon others! Through quiet and friendliness one gains the confidence of one's fellow men.

The nervous subject often enough learns to master himself in difficult matters, but in the trifling things of every day he becomes restless and fidgety. "Business is pressing; you won't get finished in time hurry up!" How this thought irritates and excites you in your business, so that people pity you! You rush hither and thither and still do not quite achieve your aim. With all your hurry and excitement you get no further, and you lose the confidence of others as well as your own self-confidence. If you were to remain collected, everything would go much better. You would remain tranquil and your tasks would be completed with regularity.

Patience in bearing up with the difficulties of the day calls for considerable strength. How frequently does the nervous person say: "I just can't do it anymore. It is too much!" Keep this thought before you; it is only nervous impatience." Bear it. One does not die of nerves. Grumbling does not improve matters. Quite the contrary. How weak people are from time to time! A contradiction, a fault or a bit of disorder will depress, render one bad-tempered and excited, and then complaining and blaming begin all over again. Deflect your thoughts, look for the good and you will come through with a light heart. You are nervous. Everything irritates you. Something is wrong – an oversight, a disappointed wish, a word of rebuke or unfriendliness – and your imagination makes everything appear bad, as though the world were falling about your ears and despair were the only course open to you. Tell yourself: "I am nervous, I exaggerate. I will not be so fastidious. These are but trifles."

All the pinpricks of life are little crosses which we should be glad to bear with the thought that God wills it. In God's will everything becomes important and of eternal worth. In these little acts of self-conquest we can best show our love for God. Ill-humors arise easily from trifles, and they grow, if they are not stifled at birth, into great quarrels or even in habitual nervous states.

One does not die of nerves. The nervous oppression announces that a soft west wind has set in or a storm is threatening. Irritability, moodiness, oppressiveness in the head or dizziness depress the spirits. What is to be done? Get on with one's work without moaning and complaining; all will soon be over. This is the way to proceed whenever mental storms arise. One gets over it. The worried imagination, of course, paints everything in the gloomiest colors; it makes every heart beat into a heart attack; every nervous irritation appears as an illness. The person who just gives way is soon no longer his own master. His lively imagination which with its absurd ideas weakens and enfeebles, can also be a great help in conquering oneself. If a dish does not please you, tell yourself how nourishing and tasty it is! Your distaste is then broken. The internal organs are easily affected in their functioning by ideas and thoughts. Just as intestines, stomach and heart can be made ill by the imagination they can be rendered healthy by the same means, as countless examples have proved. It is not eating to excess which improves the nerves, but self-conquest and sensible persuasion.

Nervous people often say: "I am too tired. I can't do any more." One should suggest to oneself the opposite; how well I feel! I could hold out much longer. I could march much further. The mind must remain the master. No one dies of tired nerves. The idea that one has strength can steel the body, just as physical exercise does, while fear cripples and enfeebles. People of choleric temperament triumph more easily over nervous weaknesses than do people of other temperaments.

Nervous people should renounce their tendency to worry too much about themselves. They should not be indolent, but at the same time they should not go frenziedly to work. One frequently discovers nervous dispositions developing among contemplatives in religious houses. Sometimes they try severe and nerve racking methods of prayer; sometimes they employ their silent periods and times of prayer worrying exclusively about their sick ego instead of devoting it to nerve strengthening commerce with God. One usually finds this phenomenon among novices.

Anxious and scrupulous people are weak enough to cling to their anxious imaginings. They should renounce their fear-beclouded judgment and obey the advice of their confessor. "Maybe I have sinned grievously. Maybe this is God's punishment for it. Maybe I am ill." Use your intelligence: get rid of the "maybe". There is no reasonable ground for it. Tell yourself: It is a result of my nervous disposition. I'll ignore it and then I shall be free. And when the fear recurs, you must ignore it and rely on the words of your confessor.

One always walks safely in obedience, even when the spiritual adviser might have made a mistake. It is not only rude on the part of the scrupulous person to take no notice of his adviser, but downright bad manners, a lack of confidence in God, for the confessor is the instrument of His commands. It is an ideal act of renunciation and obedience to God. It is the most certain guarantee of the love of God, Who blots out every sin, when the scrupulist obeys humbly, renounces himself and his judgment and abandons himself to God's mercy.

If the scrupulist thinks that he must acquire a consciousness of his purity and virtue before he confides in God, his attitude is that of the Pharisee not that of the Publican. The Savior died for sinners; to them He communicates His love. If scrupulists really believe that God forgives them, but have doubts

about their contrition and purpose of amendment, or about the rightness of their confession – without being able to say why their confession and contrition were not good – they must overcome their involuntary fear and trust blindly in their confessor's judgment. If they do not, they will begin to doubt their own good will, even though they take everything in life seriously, too seriously in fact. They are suffering from a nervous and involuntary fear of which they can be cured by obedience but not by confession.

All nervous people are despondent, but this tendency to despondency is the curse of the melancholic man. It is his primary and chief duty, his only serious task in life, to renounce and overcome this tendency by having confidence in God. The trouble is that the person plunged in despondency does not recognize it as a sin but regards it as a sign of virtue and humility and yields to it without a struggle. He thus obstructs his recovery of physical and mental health. This is why nervous melancholy is so difficult to cure. The cure of a melancholic depends entirely on this battle against despondency.

A man accounts of his despondency by putting it down to his former sins. It is the temptations and sins of the flesh which crush the melancholic man with his high ideals. He thinks other people can read his wickedness in his face. Like his first sin, discussion or mention of his condition becomes a terrifying experience and may be impossible. If a gentle confessor once lifts the load of suffering from his oppressed soul, the doubt still remains. "I am a wicked man." This idea will never allow him to be happy again, and no confession, no communion and no prayer makes him content. When the mood of oppression comes on, he gives way; his endless brooding commences. He seeks to explain and justify his low spirits. When in this state, the sufferer exaggerates his faults and begins to doubt his confessions, his communions, his good deeds and resolutions. He becomes completely despondent; he utters bitter reproaches against God for permitting him so to fall; he reproaches his parents for educating him so badly; he is bitter towards those who most want to help him. Religious doubts supervene. In his despair, his deep feeling of being forsaken by God, he sheds tears of helplessness.

If at the beginning, these nervous people find a wise confessor who draws them with a firm hand from their slough of despond, this passing condition is a wholesome experience, pregnant with hope for their future, for they become aware of the sinfulness of their despondency and take steps to ward it off. But despondent people often doubt the soothing words of their confessor. "He does not know how bad I am, and I cannot properly express myself." To their great misfortune, they seek out priests who do not know them and who take their exaggerations of their sins at their face value. These priests rebuke them sharply and so deepen their wounds. For the moment they feel relieved by their intensified compunctions, but theirs is a false peace. Their next depression reveals that the trouble is worse than ever. Another fall into sin and all is over. "The habit is too strong. I am lost. God has deserted me, and rightly so. It is all a punishment for my sins. I'm a complete failure."

It is not the worst people who frequently spend the greater part of their lives in these hellish tortures, striving to maintain themselves above water. It is a piece of good fortune, a special providence of God, if they fall at last into the hands of a real physician of souls who is able to deliver them from their torment. Such a man sees their severe trial in its true colors. He knows it is a nervous malady, and

is able to lead them from hopelessness into the presence of God. They find solace in loving communion with Him.

But even when they are on the right way to God nervous people rediscover their old weaknesses. The first spark of courage, the first exaltation they experienced in His presence, and their new found resignation, disappear with the first difficulty. Once more their disappointed soul is plunged into the darkness of despondency. Involuntary self-reproach about their lukewarmness, their wickedness and their bad will begins all over again. "I am hopeless." Or they fall once more into sin. They commit perhaps a whole series of involuntary nervous acts and they are where they started once more. The relapse can be even worse than the original condition. The melancholic man murmurs to himself: "This is God's punishment! God is punishing me for my carelessness, for my presumptuous confidence in Him. He has deserted me." The relapse was only possible because the melancholic man did not resist his despondency with all his willpower. Instead, in his depression, he brooded once more upon his wickedness, and neglected to ensure and to put all his hope in God.

If he perceives this he will rise more easily after each relapse. Sins of weakness, which do not discourage, but give him new cause to draw closer to God, no longer do him harm. In spite of their genuine love for Him, God leaves inner weaknesses in many, in order to cure them of their confidence in themselves and so to bind them more closely to Himself. All turns out for the good for the man who loves God, even the worst of nervous ill-humors, despondency, provided he sees God in all things. Until his trust in his own ability has been entirely replaced by trust in God and by resignation to His will, the man will have to suffer much. One does not voluntarily resign one's ego unless one rediscovers it twofold in God.

For this reason the nervous man must first of all cultivate confidence in God and practice His presence and resignation to His will. He must make his examination of conscience as though his confessor were the Savior. He must daily confess his sins against confidence in God to the God of his heart; Good Jesus, Thy mercy for sinners is infinite, even to me. I believe in Thy love. Forgive me for my lack of confidence in Thee today. I've allowed myself to slip back again into my morbid depression, affliction and ill-humor. I've brooded over my faults instead of thinking of something else, instead of turning my thoughts upon Thy loving presence and Thy providence. I will pull myself together again. In my prayers I will consider often the many proofs of Thy love, so that I may become ever more sure that Thou didst die for sinners, hence for me too; so that I may never forget that Thou sleekest me out, art ever at my side, in order to strengthen me, as the weakest lamb of Thy flock, in the good pastures of Thy love. Thou hast not delivered only the angels; Thou hast delivered us men, too. Take away from me my proud confidence in my own virtue. Give me confidence in Thee. Let me perceive that Thou lovest me in spite of my sins, so that I may resign myself entirely to Thee, and see in all things Thy will, Thy guiding hand. I will bear my morbid ill-humor as my health-bringing cross, but I will struggle against it, too, lest I offend Thee with my despondency.

In the struggle against despondency the following points should be noticed:

1. Never fall into the enemy's trap by brooding over sins and faults or wondering if your grief has any justifications. Regard it as a nervous anxiety about your ego, as an exaggerated and morbid oppression which you must get out of.

2. Ponder often the many proofs Jesus has given of his love for sinners. Carry a constant reminder of it in your mind, e.g., Mary Magdalen at the feet of Jesus, or the Prodigal Son in the arms of his father.

3. Endeavor to awaken confidence and at the same time to think of God's loving presence. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I put my trust in thee." "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me."

4. Never relax in your religious exercises on account of affliction, moodiness or ill-humor.

5. Disperse your ill humor by walking in the country, by entertaining kind thoughts and speaking kind words to your fellows, by resigning yourself to the will of the God Who loves you, who accompanies everywhere as an invisible friend.

6. Do not reproach yourself when all your praying and wrestling leaves you dry. Bear your misery as a wholesome cross which shakes your pride, lessens your confidence in your own strength, and maintains you in the spirit of sacrifice.

7. Yield in all things to obedience and to the guidance of the God of mercy. In the will of God all becomes important. Never tell yourself that your life is a failure.

8. Lay aside all fear of temptation and sin. Fear weakens you, but trust makes you courageous. Fear magnifies temptation. Trust in God and your own will enables you to brush it aside. This is the right way to combat the lusts of the flesh. Keep your eyes open and unclouded.

Neither the body nor its members, neither excitement nor sensation, nor delight is sinful. Hence, in the first place, that which simply awakens excitement is not sinful: curiosity, a glance, a look, a word – so long as the will does not seek pleasure. That an easily excitable man should feel quickly and strongly and desire pleasure is natural. The will is still free. You can tell that it has not consented to it by the fact that you are suffering as a result. The fact that your imagination creates the clearest images and excites you deeply is simply due to your nervous disposition. The will remains free, whatever happens in the body. The will can bear and suffer, just as one bears terrible toothache and does not need to say, "I will". If the pleasure were instead an unpleasant sensation, you certainly would not get worried or think yourself wicked. The fear arising from a doubt about having consented, or whether the will was involved or not, is to be despised, too. You need not accuse yourself of doubtful sins. Despise doubt, otherwise it will depress you, paralyze your will and weaken you.

The man who concentrates upon his will and allows his impulses to bark like dogs that cannot harm him, remains tranquil and courageous until the storm has passed. Open battle with them would only increase his agitation and lead the mind astray. Distraction of the mind and tranquillity constitute the best defense. Endeavor to observe attentively indifferent things; count the window-panes or the flowers on the wall-paper, or go out and perform some necessary task, and the storm will pass over.

Away with all fear, or you will be weak. And if doubt puts in an appearance afterwards, despise it, whatever may have happened. You are not bad because you are prey to such temptations or might possibly have sinned. Turn to God. Remember that with new love everything is made good – and better than if you had suffered no temptation. Love covers a multitude of sins – so God assures us Himself. God makes us weak so that we shall seek Him the more.

3. Fix the Anchor of your Soul in the Will of God

Fear and despondency are bad counselors, a drag upon the will; they forge great slave-chains for one in all the departments of life, they lead to absurd and thoughtless behaviour, destroy much happiness and uselessly consume much good energy. The store of nervous fear in the subconscious is not easily recognized by the tormented owner as an exaggerated self-defensive mechanism. This is because it has the appearance of being justified, of being essential for life. Nevertheless it is excessive. Nervous people always seek repose where it is not to be found. Never satisfied, sanguine and choleric people throw themselves upon external goods which never satisfy, the melancholic upon inward ones which likewise offer no support. True peace is only to be found in God; repose is only to be found in His holy will.

“Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened; I will give you rest...and you shall find rest for your souls.” This invitation from our Saviour in the gospel of St Matthew (11:28) is intended for all men of all times, and especially for those suffering from nervous troubles. In the sweet stillness and recollection of the Savior’s presence, the tortured soul experiences the divine peace. Christ speaks of His peace, a peace which the world cannot give. We do not find this peace in the fulfillment of earthly wishes, but in being firmly established in the will of God and of casting off everything else. “He who does the will of God will perceive that my teaching is of God.” He will experience true peace. “Come and taste and see how sweet the Lord is,” says the Psalmist, who also calls upon us to keep up a chase after peace in God.

“Peace be upon you!” Who longs more for this peace of Christ than those who are plagued with nervous haste? Every wish, every joy, every sorrow, every pain causes them agitation. Jesus invites them: “Let him who is thirsty, come to Me and drink!” The sweet, loving heart-to-heart converse with Him, the rest upon His breast, brings us His peace, which is an effect of the Holy Spirit, an effect of love. “Love drives away all fear,” says the beloved disciple of our Lord, who has lain upon His breast. All His disciples, all His saints have drunk of His Spirit, His peace and His love, and have found rest in God. This is the great, the most important teaching that Jesus brought us from Heaven – that we must come to Him, live in His presence, walk with Him, if we would find His peace, rest in God: for from Him there goes out a force which heals all who are prepared to do His will.

Alas, how few seek that peace, that rest! How few live in God’s presence and how few wish to walk in accordance with His will! No, they wish to find repose in creatures, in themselves; they seek their peace in the fulfillment of their own wishes. They want to walk by the light of their own spirit, not by that of the Holy Spirit. The most profound secret of true religion is to bring everything else as a sacrifice to the will of God. The man who gives himself in part, and retains part for himself, who

continues to depend upon something other than God, cannot taste, cannot experience that complete repose in Him. Instead, unrest will keep the soul apart from God in so far as it clings to a creature. This explains why so few Christians seek and know the peace of Christ; so few of them support themselves entirely upon God. Most of them support themselves upon creatures, human and material; they put their trust in their own talents.

We should love the will of God. "Peace overflowing will be theirs who love Thy commandments" says the Psalmist (118). But we only imbibe love in God's presence. For this reason joy in God's will is always linked with loving remembrance of His presence, the nearness of my Savior. I shall learn to love, only with very great difficulty, the will of a remote God which concerns me little. But I shall put my trust in the will of One Who stands lovingly at my side, Who gives His life for me, Who wishes to open His Heaven in my soul. To observe God's commandments simply out of fear, to keep His law because of Hell – that is to be a hireling, a slave. With such a mentality one cannot experience the peace of Christ. Love does not exclude fear of Hell and loss of Heaven, but it rises above itself and sees God as good, condescending and merciful. God loves me, for He is with me in spite of my sinfulness, and loads me with His gifts.

This God deserves that I should give Him my all, that I should live entirely for Him. As soon as the soul reacts to the first impulse of grace and resigns itself to God, purposing to will only as He wills from then on, God pours into it His Spirit, His love and His peace. By the act of preparedness, the soul lays aside all unrest, and can enter into relation with God, Who is Himself eternal repose and Who only finds a dwelling in tranquil souls.

This contact with God is something quite wonderful. There is something divine about the peace of Christ in the soul. Breathed in by God Himself, this repose is sublime beyond all created things; absorbed by the soul into its depths, it communicates itself also to the senses. These become inwardly collected, the whole man is satisfied and strengthened; all the longings and desires of the heart are silenced, so that the world recedes and is forgotten. St. Teresa described the effect of this peace when she held her soul in God's presence for the first time after being instructed by a book: "I thought I had the whole world under my feet, although I was only twenty-one years old." The peace of Christ enables us to renounce earthly joys and despise them.

This peace is the effect of the presence of God in the soul, the communication of the Holy Spirit, the inspiration of His love. It is the gift which Jesus brought from Heaven for all sinners who come to Him. As long as one has the peace of God one is assured of being maintained in the presence of God. It is the foundation of our inward progress, the light which shows us the way of life in and with God. It satisfies the soul and completely fills its void. It leaves no room for any other wish than to belong to the All-highest, to seek His will in all things. For he who possesses God needs nothing more and misses nothing. Peace in God stills all passions, calms the imagination and fixes the heart's desires.

The individual has found his highest good in fortune and misfortune, in joy and sorrow, when honored by men and when persecuted, peace in God remains his anchor, the anchor which fastens and holds steady his restless heart. The martyrs at the place of execution, those who confessed Christ when

mocked at, in prison and in exile, found their support in this. The peace of God rids them of all fear and grief. True Christians have enjoyed it among the most distracting duties of their office, amid the most varied sicknesses and crosses. It all depends simply upon our seeking it while living close to the Savior, on our finding our support in God, on our seeking our peace and our happiness in His holy will alone.

The man who has experienced it believes in this peace. The experience is sure and has never yet deceived anyone. Many people begin to feel this happiness at the moment when they clear their consciences and make a firm resolve to belong entirely to God and to refuse Him nothing. Take it seriously; if you are faithful to the first grace, you will discover a silence in your soul which you have never before experienced. "Truly God is in this place and I knew it not." This peace is sweet to begin with. It attracts us and drives us within ourselves. Possessing it, one feels no boredom, no tiredness, but strength, courage, joy. All other joys appear insipid. One avoids everything that might rob one of so sweet a pleasure. No miser is so fearful of losing his money as the person possessing this treasure is of losing it.

Anyone who has ever experienced this peace in God might easily regard it as imaginary or a bit of self-deception; all who have not resigned themselves entirely to God do so regard it. But let us ask those heroic souls, the saints, who speak of it with knowledge. Let us believe St. Paul who speaks of Christ's peace as surpassing all understanding. Let us believe the Savior Himself Who calls this repose His peace, a divine peace, which the world can neither give nor take away. It is a peace which is love itself and which grows, therefore, in love. St. John, the evangelist, writes to his Christians: "Do not allow yourselves to be misled by others. You have the anointing; it is as this teaches you. Follow this teaching and dwell in Christ."

The secret of our spiritual progress consists in seeking God's peace and keeping it in all the vicissitudes of the soul's life. Our love then grows, we progress in virtue and perfection; and, in the end, this tranquillity passes into that eternal rest which we beg God to grant to the dead. This is the complete possession of God, of which we have only a foretaste here on earth. The man who does not seek this peace here and now will not attain to the eternal peace. How great a misfortune it is, if a man is unwilling to experience Christ's peace! He prefers to be uselessly worried in this world, and has to suffer eternal disquiet away from God in the next. For eternal life will be but a continuation of our life in time. The man who has found his support in God and sought His holy will in this world, will be able to repose happily in God for all eternity. But he who has sought his support in the good things of the world or himself will have as his lot in the world beyond, the eternally painful unrest of the outer darkness and everlasting separation from God. "For the world with its pleasures is transitory, but he who does the will of God abides for ever."

VIII

The Ten Commandments For Nervous People

People with nervous temperaments should have clear rules of conduct and should not forget their ten commandments:

1. Recognize and stop up the mental and physical sources of nervous weakness, and you will be healthy.
2. Exercise your muscles daily, but exercise your will by daily conquests, too, and you will become master of yourself.
3. Toughen your body but toughen your will too, by voluntarily accepting humiliations, and you will not be a prey to involuntary nervous impulses.
4. Keep calm and live a reasonable and regular life. Do not be driven by excitement or a craze for work, and you will keep a cheerful face and a happy state of mind.
5. In all circumstances and in everybody look for the bright side and note the shades which depress, and you will become a happy child of the light, brightening the lives of others too.
6. Forget yourself and live for others in God and you will enter into the freedom and joy of the children of God.
7. Endure low spirits and ill humors. Distrust your feelings. Be angry with no one. Do not complain. Confide, childlike, in God and His guidance and you will be preserved from going astray.
8. Seek in your heart your place of rest with God and you will not be tossed about rudderless by your impulse.
9. Seek mental support in the will of God, and you will enjoy the peace and freedom of the children of God.
10. Accustom yourself to good and kind thoughts, judgements, words, and actions and you will become a complete child of God and worthy of Him.

These 10 principles sum up the teaching of this book. This recipe contains some strong meat. It is intended to heal sick souls and to strengthen weak ones. For those who are healthy it is the best prophylactic against sickness, the correct self-training and asceticism. It cures slackness and stiffness of will. It renders one submissive and teachable and preserves one from one-sidedness and eccentricities. It leads one to understand and tolerate oneself and others. It leads to peace and freedom and to the true happiness of the children of God, to the genuine joy which is so greatly needed by those who are nervous. When there is joy, there is peace and courage, hope and success.

Joy is indispensable for physical and spiritual development. Joy is for man what the sun is for plants. Place a sick plant with a pale stalk and hanging leaves in the warm light of the sun and it will pick up and flourish. The same will happen to a nervous person when his spirit is irradiated by genuine lasting joy. Joy improves the breathing, quickens the pulse, aids digestion, stimulates the appetite and strengthens the muscles. Provide the nervous man with joy in life and he enjoys his work and is cured. He does great things, overcomes himself and all life's difficulties. Joy charms away adversity. According to Goethe it is the "mother of all virtues."

The educational material offered in various parts of this book may be summarized for convenience under two headings. The natural and the supernatural aids are both treated here.

1.

The person who is physico-mentally sick must first discover and remove the causes of his malady, and the person who is well must guard himself against such causes. Everyone can look them up in the chapter of symptoms and causes. Everyone should be familiar with the rule about diverting the thoughts from bad to good subjects. The man who is weak in life must strengthen body and mind. The feeling of tiredness deceives the nervous person about the right way to a cure. This feeling does not disappear as a result of resting and neglect, but through training and moderate exercise of the muscles. This gives strength and self-consciousness, increases one's zest for life, strengthens the heart, encourages deep sleep and stimulates the appetite. What worries the nervous person is his fear about his health, and it is this that makes him really ill. Besides toughening himself physically, he must train his will by making a habit of checking physical and mental impulses. Let him joyfully accept as God's will the trifling irritations of every day. This will cure him of fear and indecision. Fear is particularly strong at the level of the vegetative life - in the feelings of comfort and discomfort, of hunger and thirst. How many opportunities are provided by tired feeling to steel the will to self-mastery! No one dies of tiredness.

The auto-suggestion of the imagination can also be profitably employed; one can tell oneself how useful work and walking are. One can say "pooh!" to the "perhaps" which fear suggests, or "away with it!" Fear disappears as soon as one despises it. Joy in work distracts the melancholic man from consideration of himself. Imagination minimizes his feeling of tiredness when the inclination for sport or the desire to create is awakened. Just as thought of exhaustion renders one so weak that one can do nothing, the opposite notion gives joy and consciousness of strength. The nervous person should associate with others, not remain solitary.

Furthermore, the nervous disorders of the body must be overcome. There is such a thing as a nervous lack of appetite. A feeling of repletion occurs before the meal, but it's a deception. The desire to eat then occurs between meals. The nervous person should not wait for the feeling of hunger. Nor should he set any store upon his feelings of being too full after the meal. Eating is a conscientious duty. A weakened body forebodes weak nerves and a weak mind. The intelligence must regulate eating and sleeping just as it regulates work and rest. But this regulation must not be left to nervous feelings. In the practice of one's religion, too, one must not trust or give way to feelings of reluctance. At the table the nervous person must show that he is his own master. Let him eat quietly and cheerfully. Let him

awaken a mood of thankfulness to God for the tastiness of His gifts. Let him tell himself that the dishes are wholesome. Pleasure in eating is an aid to the well-being of the whole man.

Nervous insomnia troubles a good many people. It is not very difficult to combat it. Whoever goes to bed angry, excited or full of serious thoughts will try in vain to get to sleep. Even over-anxious desire for sleep is harmful, but tranquillity, peace, light exercise before going to bed, quiet and, above all, peaceful thoughts, have the effects of a lullaby. Fear that one is not going to sleep again is fatal. After all, it does not matter if one lies awake for an hour or two now and again; provided one does not worry about it, one does at least rest. A little lack of sleep does not kill the nerves; unrest, anger, brooding, worry, bad temper and unresolved mental anxiety certainly do. For nervous people, regular hours of work and sleep are important. To have a good laugh at oneself from time to time, has a very strengthening effect upon the nerves. The person who makes others happy becomes happy himself. This is a good principle for nervous people.

Stomach troubles and lazy bowels are common among melancholic people. Uninterrupted thinking and brooding make them bad tempered. According to Dubois, ninety percent of all named maladies stem from mental depression. Who has known a hypochondriac who did not complain of stomach troubles and constipation? Once the spirits have been cheered the physical ill disappears. One must not allow the intestinal trouble to become chronic, but one should not apply continuously the most drastic methods to combat it. In this connection regular meals often have a beneficial effect. Change of scene and air and relaxation from mental work are recognized means of strengthening the nerves and forming new blood. They are sometimes necessary for nervous sufferers. A spa cure should be undertaken after consultation and with the approval of a specialist.

2.

The methods of religious education can be grouped under four headings. The four groups may be regarded as the four main pillars of the spiritual life which are needed by the healthy as well as the sick.

(a) Humble self-knowledge is a necessary foundation for all religious influence. The Savior did not come for the just but for sinners, and this means: He can only heal and deliver those who admit that they should be other than they are, that they are sick and need curing. Humility is the truth about oneself. The human being has all sorts of means of shying away from this truth. With his involuntary fear of self-depreciation, the nervous person finds it impossible to discover this truth without assistance from outside. Let him, therefore, seek a point of attachment from which he can start climbing, in Communion, in walking with God. Let him sincerely ascribe to Him every good thing he possesses, honoring and thanking Him for all His gifts. To himself let him ascribe his own sinfulness and be satisfied to accept what his sins deserve. Let all his hopes be in the infinite goodness and mercy of God. "O God, Who art Thou, and who am I? Thou art an abyss of goodness, and I an abyss of ingratitude."

(b) The second pillar of the spiritual life is the loving recollection of God's presence which can be the greatest consolation in life to those who are nervously weak, provided they seek peace in God as described at the end of Chapter I in Part Two of this book. This point is fundamental to the whole of the

spiritual life, for without this pillar, the other three could not be erected. Without the loving recollection of God's presence, without converse with God, without repose in Him, no humble self-knowledge is possible. Without it, there can be no willing resignation to His will and no selfless benevolence towards fallible fellow-creatures. Walking with God is the beginning and the end of the spiritual life. It leads the beginner to love; the more advanced practices love; and the saint is completed in it. Just as love cannot be given to oneself – it is the gift of Christ, a present from the Holy Ghost – so one can only learn to walk with God if one communes inwardly with God, full of hope and love, and is drawn by the sweet fragrance of His anointing. God enables everyone to feel this attraction, for Christ makes no exceptions when He says: "He who thirsts for it, let him come to Me and drink." It is the business of the preacher to awaken thirst, though it can be done by an intimate friend or a good book. Turn your thoughts from yourself to God!

(c) Resignation to God's will molds the character of the spiritual life, because charity – love – consists therein. Love is mutual communication between two lovers. God draws us to Himself when we approach Him with faith, with the object of yielding to His will and looking for Him in all our actions. This is what "walking with God" means.

As the nervous person is rather timid of making sacrifices, he should combine with his quiet communion with God the task of training himself to make them joyfully. God's holy will demands the little self-denials of every day and gives to the soul joy, courage and confidence. Peace in Him gives one strength to make heavy sacrifices. The crucified Savior should often be the object of inward recollection and contemplation. Religion consists not in consoling emotions but in the strength to make sacrifices. This strength develops in the soul from the consolation of God's presence, and reaches its climax in complete resignation to God and love of the Cross. A religious life which does not strengthen a man to endure, and fit him to perform his everyday duties, is not enlightened by grace and has no solidity. The essential in all religion is the power of the Holy Spirit, Who pours love into the heart and inspires resignation to God's will. He teaches the soul to be forgetful of self and to work for others. The person who wants to enjoy life must live for God and others, and must render others happy. People of melancholic temperament must ever bear in mind that their countless self-reproaches and their baseless complaints constitute a permanent and very serious hindrance to God: they prevent by their remaining depressed the fairest blossoming of the spiritual life.

One of the chief obstacles on the way to God is that frenzy for work which is manifested in all departments of life, even that of religion, by some nervous people. The most important rule here is order. With patience and calm all can be finished in due course. Let others say what they will, do everything steadily and purposefully. Control your thoughts and you will then be able to control this frenzy for work. The most effective remedy is to avoid spiritual gushing and work peacefully with God in unflinching resignation to His will. The man who only wants what God wills, and desires it as God desires it, and wishes only to achieve in life what God wills, enters into his heart's rest, enters into God. As soon as a desire is awakened to do something, to get something finished quickly, to acquire something, the thing to do is to pause a moment in God's presence and to harmonize one's wishes with His holy will. The way to Christ's peace, which surpasses all understanding, is to desire nothing for oneself and to be content with what God sends. One soon realizes that in this way one does more, and achieves more, than

one did in one's former haste and confusion, and that in one's dealings with others one can keep one's moods in check.

In this complete resignation to the guidance of God lies the guarantee of a cure for the nerves; for to walk beside Him, carefree as a child, sets the mind free of every fear. Severe mental depressions, too, will occur less frequently and will be so much less serious that, when borne in and for Him, they never upset the nerves. Low spirits occur then merely as passing phases. The mind becomes serene and is almost inaccessible to gloom. But the man who has not tried and experienced it for himself, does not realize that God's Spirit achieves all things in a soul given to Him. He imagines he can obtain peace by taking thought, brooding, hard work and agitation.

(d) The fourth pillar of the spiritual life is charity, the mark, the seal, the real test of genuine love for God. Neurotic people are also involved in great difficulties on account of charity. They have to employ all their strength to solve these difficulties if their minds are to attain to a quiet and peaceful state, and their nerves are to become strong. Moody sensitivity, aversions, continuous fault finding, a readiness to take offence, which sometimes develop into open enmity and to concealed or openly expressed hatred – these things often keep them for days on end in a state of nervous tension and depress their spirits. They blame others for it, and fail to see that the cause of their moody behaviour lies in themselves and their weak nerves. When they are reproached they become more agitated, more annoyed and further discouraged. It is only when they become aware of the curative effects of a benevolent mind that they begin to ponder over themselves. Then they long for deliverance from sensitivity through kindly thoughts, judgments, words and actions.

The difficult task of educating oneself to feel kindly, to be good to others – which involves a complete reversal of one's mental powers – requires the continual help of God in an inward life. Otherwise, the nervous subject loses courage, and with it, bit by bit, a distinct knowledge of the way. For the man who walks in God, joy in believing and in doing God's will springs from the power of Christ's Spirit. To live by faith means to become a soul conscious of its strength, loving sacrifice and scorning all fearful apprehensions. A man who so lives understands the words of the Lord when He says that nothing is impossible to Faith, and that, with a grain of faith no bigger than a mustard seed, His disciples can remove mountains. By faith, the inward man is bound to God, he drinks of God's Spirit, His strength and His love. United with God, he can do anything.

IX

The Nervous Man's Problem

The solution to the nervous man's problem depends on the correct method of caring for souls. His soul and his body must find health through joy in God. Joy is the pure source of strength, the medicine for every spiritual depression. True joy in God revivifies and provides strength for every

eventuality. The task of the nervous person is summed up in: Training for joy in God. He must, from his youth onwards, cultivate his mind in this sense, and seek guidance.

If the nervous person yields to the disorderly impulses of his individual temperament, and lets himself go, his disposition becomes depraved, he becomes one-sided, he remains rough and uncultured, or he becomes a runaway from his duties to God, charity, family and profession. He is morally obliged to solve the problems of caring for his soul and of training himself. To neglect it would be sinful. All are obliged to overcome temptations and to avoid sin. His chief sin is his hypersensitivity, which, with the passionate abuses which accompany it, proves an obstacle to him in his relations with God in charity, in health, in the fulfilment of his duties and in his profession. He has to fight it as his chief temptation in all its harmful manifestations, particularly despondency, which is a sin against hope, and which almost always depresses him. If he gives way to his ill-humors, he sees his mental and physical troubles doubled, he magnifies them and becomes weaker and weaker, until he is finally useless for life, duty and profession. His mind is poisoned by fear and foolish fancies and urges him to do silly things. He becomes physically ill, too. He must clothe his all too tender mind with protective armor, "the armor of God" of which the apostle speaks: "the girdle of truth" – self-knowledge, "the breastplate of justice," "the shoes of the gospel of peace," "the shield of faith," "the helmet of salvation" and "the sword of the spirit – God's word" (Eph. 6: 13-17).

One should begin one's training for joy in God with the help of a good and wise confessor. Such a man does not limit himself to removing spiritual poison, mortal or habitual sins and the oppressive consciousness of guilt; he fills the penitent's soul with the necessary confidence in God, with hopes of a happy life in God. He gives him the heartening courage to become saintly, not in his own strength but through God's mercy, and in spite of all his sins, defeats and weakness. The guide to God, the confessor, or the book written with this purpose, must then encourage childlike, simple prayer in the presence of God, and trusting communion with Him, the God of the heart. In this constant inward prayer the soul finds itself drawn to God; it finds peace, repose, strength, trust and joy in Him.

It is only by degrees in quiet converse with God, that a man learns to observe himself as God sees him, and to see that God loves him in spite of his sins and weaknesses. Hope, the blessed mother of all courage and strength, awakens in him the conviction that he can do all things in God, and even become a saint. He now sees for the first time what he lacked – hope. He realizes that he previously lacked confidence in God, in His love, nearness and power, that his soul was unnecessarily possessed by fear, even in the matter of his salvation. He no longer allows himself to be depressed by his faults and sins. He turns immediately to his present Savior with an act of contrition, begins anew and repairs the damage with new acts of love. The hope and assurance that God endows man with sanctity, if he truly seeks Him, walks in His presence and does all things in accordance to His will, fills a man with new joy in life, a new will to live.

Only now is the man equipped to grasp the partial objectives of his spiritual training, and to solve his life's problem, the finding of joy in God. How am I to train myself consciously to enjoy doing God's will? To enjoy doing the duties that life imposes? To enjoy orderliness, truth and the self-knowledge which will tolerate no concealment, and which is grateful to have faults pointed out? To

enjoy working with others, being humble before others? To enjoy giving way, being kind in my thoughts, judgments, words and actions? To enjoy forgiving? To enjoy seeing the better side, the good, in my fellow-men, nature and life? To endure and deny myself with joy?

In this joy the mind is transformed and the face of the earth is renewed. In this joy is to be found the strength to bear all life's little crosses and pinpricks, the strength to conquer one's self and one's selfishness, one's rash judgments, one's preconceived opinions, one's over readiness to defend one's self. It supplies the strength to bear despondency, depression, moodiness, overstrain, touchiness, taciturnity, fear for one's health, fear lest one should lose the good opinion of others, or not be appreciated. In the joy of being conscious of God's will, and of being of no account, the true greatness of man before God, the ever cheerful mind of the true child of God comes to maturity. Therein life is completely renewed; body and soul regain their health and true happiness consists. A childlike approach to God is the condition for entry into His kingdom. "I tell you truthfully, the man who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a child, will never enter into it" (Mark 10: 15).

The author's object in writing these essays is to provide some rules which, if followed, will enable a person to train himself to become an ever cheerful child of God. The mind of a child of God is a gift from above. "The spirit you have now received is not, as of old, a spirit of slavery, to govern you by fear; it is the spirit of adoption, which makes us cry out, Abba, Father!" Jesus bids us seek this spirit; "Make it your first care to find the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be yours for the asking."

The End

Please pray for Fr. Joseph Massmann, RIP

